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THE
ARNEST
METHODIST.

A MEMOIR
OF
MR. THOMAS DIXON.



600024315L







yours Affly
Thomas Dixon.



210. m. H. S.



yours Affly
Thomas Dixon.

210. m. 45.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE written this Memoir at the request of a few friends in my native town, who wished to have some remembrancer of my late Uncle.

A perusal of it will I hope amply justify the title given.

I am conscious of having suffered my pen to run hurriedly over the paper, but this has been unavoidable through pressure of other work.

The Memoir might have been written at much greater length, but it has been my aim to compress it as much as possible, chiefly that it may be published in a cheap form.

JOSEPH DIXON.

LONDON, S.E., 1871.

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THE EARNEST METHODIST.

CHAPTER I.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

"His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, This was a man !"

SHAKSPEARE.

MOST people have a natural curiosity to know something of the personal appearance of those of whom they read. A popular writer has said—

"Such a shape hath such a soul, so that a deep discern-
er
From his make will read the man, and err not far in
judgment."

We do not entirely concur in this senti-

ment. On the contrary, we believe it is but seldom, if ever, that a perfectly just judgment can be formed of a man from his outward and visible frame, though it may sometimes help to a readier and more thorough understanding of many things in connection with his life. Coleridge once made a great mistake when sitting opposite to a gentleman at a public dinner, who had a magnificent forehead, and whose whole bearing was suggestive of immense capacity laboriously suppressed, he thought within himself, "Ah! if he would but speak, what grand things we should hear." At length, he did speak; but, alas! his speech at once revealed a total want of religion, education, and sense.

For the benefit of those who were not acquainted with the subject of this Memoir, we give the following brief sketch.

THOMAS DIXON was a man of middle stature, somewhat inclined to be corpulent, but never attaining a state in which he

could be called uncomfortably stout. His physical frame was strong—partly owing to nature, and partly to the care which he took of himself, and the work which he did. Most people who knew him would admit, too, that he was what is commonly termed “good-looking.” He had a fine, manly, open, English face; and no matter when you met him, whether in the morning, at mid-day or at night, there always seemed to be a cheerful and winning smile upon it.

His physiognomy gave evidence that he enjoyed the religion which for so many years he was not ashamed to profess. When he had passed the age of three-score years and ten, his hair still covered his head, though time had much thinned it, and its colour had changed from a dark brown to a gray. He usually wore a suit of black, with a neatly-folded white cravat, and, as if he had undergone a military training, walked erect.

A stranger meeting him might readily have supposed that he was one of the

resident ministers of the town, if not its worthy Vicar ; and, as we proceed, we shall find that this appearance was not wholly out of place, for he did the work of a minister, whilst at the same time pursuing his more direct calling as a man of trade. His voice was, for richness and compass, one of the noblest we ever heard. Until hushed in death it lost not its clear and musical sound. When he joined in singing with a congregation, no matter how large, it was difficult for him to prevent its being heard above the rest ; and when he preached, or spoke at a public meeting, it was easy for the outermost circle of his audience to hear distinctly all he said. There are, perhaps, few who are favoured with the physical advantages which he possessed ; but as we briefly trace out his life, we shall find they were not given in vain, nor were they badly used. He speaks of them himself, often with amazement, and always with gratitude. On his seventieth birthday he writes : " I was never more youthful, more

active, and better able for work in or out of the Church ;” and not long before his course was finished he made in his diary this entry : “ I was at the prayer-meeting this morning at 7 o’clock ; at the Sunday-school at 9 $\frac{1}{4}$; at the public service in Grantham Chapel at 10 $\frac{1}{2}$; preached at Colsterworth (7 miles away) at 2 $\frac{1}{2}$; and again at 5 ; and again at 6 ; after which I conducted a public Prayer-meeting, and then returned home just as well as when I started.”

We wonder how many have the power and disposition, after more than seventy years of life have glided away, to do such a day’s work as this ; yet it was with him not much out of the ordinary way. He seemed, indeed, as if he were formed by nature, even as through grace he was ever ready, to “ endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” both in conflict and toil. He was seldom heard to say, after the busiest day in business or in preaching, “ I am tired ;” and if he did ever

happen to say so, the next morning was almost sure to find him writing in his journal, or declaring to some friend he chanced to meet in his walks, "Praise the Lord, I'm as fresh as a lark."

CHAPTER II.

HOME TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP.

"A child rightly brought up will be like a willow-branch, which, broken off, and touching the ground, at once takes root."—BEECHER.



THOMAS DIXON was born at Bardney, a village in Lincolnshire, and not far from the city of Lincoln. He was the eldest of eight children, of whom three were sons and five daughters. His birthday was the 27th of July, 1794. His parents were poor, but by their peaceable and upright behaviour gained the respect of their neighbours and of all who knew them. Both the father and mother were obliged to work hard to provide themselves and their children with bread. Each child, too, was

taught, as soon as possible, the necessity of labour. Thomas was accustomed at an early age to accompany his father into the fields to hoe turnips or mend hedge-rows. This was a wholesome lesson for the lad, though not pleasant to learn. It was the foundation of prosperity in business, and the secret of a comfortable home and a respectable position in after life. He could never boast of great talent, or skill; but, through habits of industry learned at the beginning of life, he acquired that without which talent and skill are of little avail. None could ever say of him that he was a loungeur, or bring against him a charge of idleness. It was "work, work, work," with him all the way through, though it was never degraded in his hands to painful drudgery; on the contrary, he ever found pleasure in it from the commencement of life to its close.

The discipline of the family was good. Neatness and cleanliness were strictly inculcated. The rod seldom had to be used



—kindness and firmness for the most part prevailed. The home was indeed a happy one, though humble; and well ordered, though destitute of display.

A Wesleyan Methodist Society was established at Bardney, of which the parents early became members, and continued such to the end of their days. It is somewhat remarkable, in the case of the father, that although his membership extended over forty years, and his life bore testimony to the sincerity of his profession, he did not, until a short time before his death, enjoy a clear sense of God's pardoning love. "I was, too, the more surprised," (writes Thomas after visiting him when he lay calmly waiting for his summons hence) "to find him not only in a very happy state of mind—without a doubt,—without a cloud, but also pouring forth out of his memory beautiful and appropriate passages of God's word, and verses of Wesley's hymns; although during his life he could repeat nothing of poetry and nothing of scripture except that one

short text, 'Jesus wept.' We have a very different account of the mother. She seems to have been a woman whose mind was much superior to her position, and whose piety was of a very high order. Her membership in the Methodist society extended over fifty years, during which time she walked in the light of God's countenance, and adorned her profession by purity of life. She gave herself much and earnestly to prayer, and had great power therein. It was whilst she was praying that her husband received the "full assurance of faith;" and her daughter Mary also subsequently obtained the same blessing under precisely similar circumstances, and died in peace. Thomas had a great admiration and love for his mother. The mention of her name, or even the very thought of her, woke up very tender feelings in his heart when years of manhood had fled away. He often makes mention in his diary of her prayers. Almost as soon as he could understand anything, they made a

deep and lasting impression upon his mind. He mixed with other lads in the village and sought to throw himself into their careless and, sometimes, mischievous spirit, but it seemed as if it were impossible for him to do so. The recollection of his mother's prayers was ever present with him, and he could not shake himself free from the good influences which, doubtless in answer to them, were brought to bear upon his soul. Late in life he writes, "What will not a mother's pleadings do? Christ could not resist them in the days of His flesh and His heart is as tender now. The very thought of my mother's prayers has cheered me scores of times when entering the pulpit, and when worn down by much thinking and work. I shall always consider my dear parent the spiritual mother of her entire family."

There is surely something to be learnt from this. When Dr. Prideaux, author of *The Connection of the Old and New Testaments*, was dying, he gathered his children

around him, and made his will to them in these words, "I have no legacy to leave you, my dear children, but pious poverty, God's blessing, and a father's prayers." That was a better legacy than broad acres and thousands of gold and silver. Let every parent take care whether the poverty be left out or not, that the piety, the blessing, and the prayers form part of the wealth which he bequeaths to his children.

Nothing worthy of special note is known of Thomas Dixon's childhood. It passed away without any hair-breadth 'scapes, or wild and romantic adventures, being recorded in connection with it. His parents were too poor to send him regularly to the village school; but sometimes, when by a little thrifty contriving a few pence could be spared from the hard-earned cash, he took his seat among other boys at the school-house and by that means learned to read, write, and "do sums." He was regularly taken to chapel, as regularly sent to the Sunday-school, and occasionally permitted

to accompany his father or mother to the Methodist Society-class.

When fifteen years old his parents began to think of giving him a trade, and resolved at length to apprentice him to a carpenter in the village. This was a great thing for them to do, but they plainly saw what an advantage it would be to him. "Let him learn a trade (they said) and he will have his fortune in his hands for life." Herein they gave evidence of being possessed of good common sense. Full well they knew it could never be their happiness to leave him any property, but as well they knew that with a trade he would, by diligence and perseverance, be able to secure for himself all that would be needful. His master's name was Dean. He was a good man, and took great interest in his new apprentice. He found in him a disposition and aptitude to learn. He observed in him, also, a more than ordinary thoughtfulness and took occasion therefrom to speak pointedly and freely to him on religious subjects. Many

years afterwards he acknowledged himself a great debtor to Mr. Dean, for his kindly and well-timed counsel. Under the roof of this pious and worthy man he soon began to feel deeply concerned for the salvation of his soul. Powerful conviction of sin which, as he says, "I could not get rid of," seized him. His little chamber now became the place of earnest wrestling for the pardon and peace of God, yet, from some cause or other—who can explain it?—that pardon and peace were not obtained until some years had passed away.

Reference is made in his diary to one particular night which he seems to have spent in very agony of spirit. "After leaving my companions, with whom I had been indulging in what some would call innocent recreative pleasure, I became very uneasy, nay, very miserable. On retiring for rest, sleep left me, and trembling and horror came upon me to such an extent that every bone in my body seemed to be in motion. Real agony was mine. Death

and judgment were before me. In this sad plight I continued until the morning light came, when business engagements called me forth, and a natural reservedness of mind prevented my naming it to anyone."

When between sixteen and seventeen years old he joined himself to the Wesleyan Methodist Society. It was a step taken wisely and thoughtfully. True, he was not happy in God; he did not feel himself to be a member of Christ's body, united to Him by faith. Ought he then, some may be ready to ask, to have identified himself with the visible Church? Why not? The Methodist rule on this point is very simple, and, we think, scriptural too. "There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies; viz., '*a desire to flee from the wrath to come and be saved from their sins.*'" Thomas Dixon had that. "*The wrath to come*" seemed ever to be sounding in his ears, and who will say he did not well, in his haste to escape it, to join himself to the Christian Church?

It is to be feared that many are kept from the enjoyment of religion, who ardently desire that enjoyment, because they follow not this example. Never let the solemnity of membership in the Church of Christ be lost sight of; but, never let the duty be disregarded when there is "*a desire to flee from the wrath to come and be saved from sins.*" "I believe in the communion of saints," not only as a source of encouragement and strength to "such as do stand," but, as a means of help and guidance to those who are seeking the Lord, "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him."

It is touching to read the records in his journal for some time after he became a Methodist. He was laughed at, and persecuted, but that occasioned little care. The trouble was about his soul. "To me (he writes) it is much easier to find the right people than the Lord. I want a sense of pardon, but know not how to obtain it. I pray for hours together, in the silent night, but no cheering voice of deliverance comes."

Many will be ready to sympathise with him in this state. There are some who seem very readily to enter into the possession of conscious peace with God ; but others are kept a long time waiting at the pool. The explanation is difficult. It may be an imperfect conception of the plan of salvation. It may be the want of a full surrender of all to Christ. It may be a stumbling on the simplicity of faith. It may be—who can say what ? that keeps a seeking soul still seeking without finding God. Yet there is no need for discouragement. If an answer come not on first asking, repeated enquiry will eventually elicit a reply, otherwise, what is the meaning of the parables of “The Friend at midnight” and “The Importunate Widow ?” For wise, though unexplained reasons, God may keep the most sincere and earnest, waiting as He did “The Woman of Sidon ;” but determinate and persevering faith will at length call forth the words, “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

A few extracts from the diary will show how earnestly Thomas Dixon longed for the assurance of his acceptance with God.

1813. "*February 8.*—I am full of guilt and condemnation. My bad and foolish heart leads me astray. I envy the quietude of the beasts of the field.

"*March 28.*—Attended a lovefeast at Wragby, and, for the first time, with great trembling, told what I feared and wanted. All were happy about me, but deep misery filled my own soul.

"*March 30.*—Early up to plead with God, but no reply : yet a little hope sprang up, and I began to ask, Is He not able to save me and to save me now ?

1814. "*February 27.*—Rose in deep distress about two o'clock ; spent several hours in prayer entreating the Lord to show me the cause of my state ; but no answer came. Between five and six o'clock a few friends met for prayer and converse which were very good.

“*March 25.*—Who?—who can explain this struggle for life? Yet by God’s help I maintain the fight. Our five o’clock morning prayer meetings are greatly blessed to me.

1815. “*January 29.*—Am yet without a sense of pardon. I cannot tell the pain of mind which I feel. Am often tempted to give up all, but God won’t let me. I felt a little quickened at the prayer meeting, yet am not right. Am now adopting Mr. Wesley’s plan of fasting two days per week with many hours of prayer.”

In the midst of all this he was careful not to neglect any religious duty. He threw himself heartily into any and every work assigned him by the Church? His name appeared on the Prayer-Leaders’ Plan, and in company with a few others he went from village to village to conduct meetings for prayer. These meetings were the means of promoting a religious revival in the neighbourhood. Many persons were

awakened and brought to God, but he sorrowed and took shame to himself, inasmuch as whilst he saw others were being saved he could not find the way of life.

In the December of 1815 his so long and fiercely agitated spirit was at rest. "Thank my God (he writes) I am now pardoned, freely, fully. Last night I felt an increased longing for the assurance, and resolved, like Jacob, to wrestle until suffered to conquer. After some time of pleading, so satisfactorily did the Lord reveal Himself to me, that I could at once and with confidence say "Abba Father, my Lord and my God." Joy was not abundant, but doubt was gone and faith was strong."



CHAPTER III.

SETTLEMENT AT GRANTHAM.

"Y'had best, quoth Ralpho, as the ancients
Say wisely,—Have a care o' th' main chance,
And look before you ere you leap ;
For as you sow, y'are like to reap."

BUTLER.

 IS apprenticeship being finished,
Thomas bade farewell to Mr. Dean,
whom he had faithfully served, and
ventured out upon the world, feeling
himself

“———— as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on ocean's foam to sail,
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath
prevail.”

He was tolerably efficient at his trade,
but work just then was scarce. At “The
Locks,” however, he found employment for
nine weeks, and then entered into an engage-

ment at Wragby for seven weeks more ; at the expiration of which time he returned to Bardney, where he remained labouring at his trade for nearly twelve months. Incessant change is by no means conducive to spiritual prosperity ; but, by earnest prayer as well as by association with the people of God wherever he went, he managed to preserve his piety from decline or injury. He won for himself such respect amongst the Methodists at Bardney, that he was appointed to the office of Class-Leader, and soon afterwards made his first attempt at preaching.

In March, 1817, necessity compelled him to take leave a second time of his native village and again go forth in search of work. Wandering along for nearly forty miles he at length found himself at Belvoir Castle, hoping to obtain employment, but was disappointed. Thence he bent his steps to Syston, where, finding something to do, he remained a month. Then, again, as he records, "I was all afloat ; no work ; in the

midst of clouds ; yet, wonderfully supported and every fear met with the promise, ‘ Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’ ”

Grantham was the next place to which he came. It is a clean, healthy, well-to-do town, noticeable to the traveller on the Great Northern Railway for its very lofty church-spire and the number of red brick houses it contains. Little did Thomas Dixon think as he entered Grantham that Providence had destined it to be his home and the scene of his labours for the rest of his life. The church with its notable spire would be the first object to meet his gaze. Well might its excellent set of bells have rung out a merry peal that day to welcome the young man who for fifty years was to be one of the best and most useful inhabitants of that quiet country town. The first entry which he made in his journal at Grantham reads thus, “ Here I am, with only one desire,—to live for God and souls.” Underneath this, forty-seven years afterwards, he wrote,

“Thank my God, here I am still, with just the same wish.”

For several months he could get but little work. This greatly discouraged him ; but he found relief in prayer, and asked earnestly for a spirit of resignation and perseverance. At length, however, having scarcely any money, and no prospect of employment, he could do no other than resolve to leave. He would have left ; everything was arranged for his departure, but just then, a good Methodist friend—Mr. Cocking, afterwards the Rev. Thomas Cocking—knowing his circumstances, gave him a bookcase to make. That was the turning point, for “before it was finished, plenty of work came in and continued to do as long as I needed it.”

From this time Providence smiled upon him. Almost immediately upon the completion of the book-case he was engaged to assist in the erection of six new houses, and within a very short time from this he found himself the master of a good business and the employer of a number of men.

Uprightness and promptitude marked his business career. He was never known to swerve in the least degree from truth in buying or selling, whatever apparent advantage might tempt to such a course. His was not the loose notion which, unfortunately, too many professedly Christian men entertain, and which they embody in the sentiment, "Business is one thing and religion is another." Thomas Dixon made them both inseparably one. Religion ruled and actuated him alike in his workshop, sale-rooms and counting-house; and he found the advantage of it, not only in his own peace and satisfaction, but in the business itself. His customers increased, and those who bought of him once were not afraid to buy of him again. There were times when he might have considerably enlarged his business, but he studiously avoided this lest it should have involved him in too much care, and interfered with his religious life. A comfortable living, and a little to give to God's cause and the poor, were all he

coveted, and these the Lord always provided for him. He was not at all times so shrewd as he might have been. Sharpers, who could talk with fluency and a mixture of pathos, too readily overcame his unsuspecting nature, and not unfrequently did he find himself "taken in" by them. There is such a thing as Christian sternness; but that grace he failed to attain and cultivate. It is pitiful to find him time after time lamenting in his diary the deceitfulness of persons who managed to induce him to lend them money, or become surety for them. Yet he counted even these amongst the "all things working together for good," and soon forgave and forgot. He wrote on one occasion "My softness in lending, and in being bound for falling men must now be very painfully rewarded. But I can yet say 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.'" This was an admirable spirit to manifest, and a better method of consoling himself under such losses he could not have adopted;

but he was foolish, and deserved blame for allowing himself to fall into the same snare again and again.

More than once he indulged the thought of giving up business and devoting himself wholly to the work of preaching the gospel. In the year 1819 he became so deeply impressed that it was his duty to go as a Missionary to the heathen, that after mentioning it to several friends, he, through the Superintendent of the Circuit, made the offer. A recommendation from the Quarterly Meeting being necessary before he could be passed on for examination to the District-Meeting, and thence to the Conference, the matter was, at the March Quarterly Meeting in the above year, according to his own words, "fairly and at length discussed." Not a word was said against his character and ability, but much in praise of them, yet it was thought another year's study and labour would be of great advantage. He was therefore requested to postpone his offer for one year. This was a great

disappointment. It was difficult for him to feel resigned to such a decision, so fully had he set his heart upon Missionary work in foreign lands. Looking at the whole matter forty-three years afterwards, he says "I believe the judgment of the meeting was right; and had the Superintendent of the Circuit kindly taken me by the hand, and with affection and wisdom directed me, the delay would have been of great service, and I should still have gone. But I was left and neglected, so the matter slipped through to my great sorrow."

Perhaps he was as much to blame for "the slipping through of the matter" as the Superintendent of his Circuit; for on the 4th of May in this same year he took to himself a wife, and wrote a letter in which it is stated that he had resolved "to settle down and content himself with labouring as a Local Preacher." He nevertheless maintained, even to the end of his life, that he ought to have gone as a Missionary. Why, then, did he not wait and offer himself again at the

end of twelve months as the Quarterly Meeting had advised? But we must not be too severe in attributing blame in this instance, for

“When a lady’s in the case,
You know all other things give place.”

The object of his choice was a widow of the name of Pickard—a very worthy person though somewhat older than himself. She was a woman of good domestic habits, benevolent in her disposition, and truly devoted to God. In all things she proved herself a help-meet to him, and they lived together in great happiness for forty-five years. Concerning their union he writes, “We gave ourselves to each other in the Lord by solemn covenant and united prayer.”

In November, 1831, he offered himself as a Missionary in connection with the Soldiers and Sailors’ Society, but this offer was, for some unexplained reason, not accepted. Probably it was that the Society was in want of funds, for soon after that date it ceased to exist.

In 1834, business being very discouraging at Grantham, he was induced to open an establishment at Bourne, intending if the business there should prosper, to leave Grantham. But, having tried it for two years and thereby lost a considerable sum of money, he was glad enough to abandon it, and keep only to the business at Grantham. This he did to the end of his life, never again attempting, or, as far as we have any information, thinking of taking his departure from "the good old town." He gained respect and kept respect among all classes. He took great interest in everything that concerned the social and moral welfare of the people, and laboured hard to promote religion among them. There are few street corners or vacant places in the lower parts of the town where he did not at some time or other stand up to preach ; and there are few courts or alleys into which he did not find his way for the charitable purpose of visiting the sick or relieving the poor. We may here, too,

be allowed to add that he was the means of bringing his brother David to Grantham, who now (1871) for the second time occupies the position of chief magistrate of that borough. Not many persons in the humbler walks of life have become more generally known, and none, perhaps, deserve to be had in more respectful and affectionate remembrance by their fellow-townsmen, than Thomas Dixon.

CHAPTER IV.

PIETY.

"'Tis not enough to draw forms fair and lovely,
A hearty holiness must crown the work,
As a gold cross the minster dome, and show
Like that instonement of divinity.
That the whole building doth belong to God."

BAILEY.

E have already seen how the foundation of the religious life of the subject of this Memoir was laid. Too much importance cannot be attached to that. A right beginning is often the secret of subsequent prosperity and success. He began by penitently and earnestly seeking "the forgiveness of sins." He first satisfied himself that there was "no condemnation," but that "being justified by faith he had peace with God through

our Lord Jesus Christ," and in the joyousness of his soul he could sing

"My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear :
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And, Father, Abba Father, cry !"

But in this experience, blessed as it was after his long and earnest struggle for it, he allowed not himself to be content. Plainly did he see that justification could not long be retained unless some higher state were sought after. The necessity for the constant exercise of faith in Christ, daily growth in grace, and the purification of his entire nature, deeply impressed itself upon him. The Psalmist prayed, not only that his iniquities might be blotted out, but that his heart might be cleansed. This now became his prayer. Referring in his journal to the day on which he obtained the assurance of sins forgiven, he writes, "And now at once I saw a higher state, and felt called to go up. I then and there

began to seek for the great blessing of holiness."

What is meant by the term holiness? Is it obtainable in the present life? How is it to be obtained? Can it be obtained gradually, instantaneously, or both? Have I any right or authority to seek it; or, is it only to be enjoyed by a favoured few? If I seek it, how shall I know when I have found it; and if I find it, will it be possible for me amid all my business, and worldly engagements, to retain it? These and many other like questions occupied his mind. How was he to answer them? First, he did what every one with like feelings and desires should do, — he searched the Bible to see what it said about holiness.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

“Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These and many other passages which directly enforced, or referred to the subject, he carefully noted, and by the aid of commentaries, especially those of Clarke and Benson, as well as by earnest prayer, sought to ascertain their meaning. By this means he quickly settled three things :

Firstly. Holiness is attainable.

Secondly. It is attainable in the same way as pardon, viz., by the exercise of faith in Christ.

Thirdly. It is my duty to seek and obtain it.

Next, he read other works on the subject,

and also studied the lives of holy men and women, amongst whom he makes special mention of John Wesley, William Bramwell, and Lady Maxwell. He then fully resolved that the blessing should be his. Difficulties at once presented themselves. Some, from whom he hoped to derive assistance and direction, discouraged him ; others admired his spirit, but thought him mistaken in his views, and zealous over much ; but, to use his own language, "In spite of all, I pushed after holiness." It was the prize which he had set before him, and through a crowd of doubts and difficulties he pressed towards it. To live without sin ; to live with his heart full of love to God and full of love to men, whether his enemies or his friends ; to live with every desire and passion of his nature under the control of grace ; to live with his very thoughts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ; to be pure after the model of God's purity ; to be perfect after the example of Divine perfection ;—this was his desire, and with all earnestness of soul

did he now seek for it. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Blessed words! He read them, he repeated them, he prayed over them again and again, and nothing but the realisation of their truthfulness could satisfy him. Many hours of sleep he denied himself that he might have more of prayer for this blessing. We need not give more than one brief record taken from a multitude written in his journal about this time, to show how earnestly his soul went out after it.

"*January* 14, 1828.—I long, I pant, I labour with an intensity indescribable—such as I never felt before—after holiness. My soul is restless for the clear manifestation of my union, my perfect oneness with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and so greatly do I feel for the unconverted around me that nearly every breath I breathe is a prayer for their salvation."

With such a craving as this his spirit was

not long to remain unsatisfied. He was just on the threshold of "the Higher Christian Life," a few more steps and that life would be entered, and by happy experience he would know what is meant by the promise, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," etc.

On the 20th of January, not a week after the above record was made, he writes, "Thank God! faith is growing, I can, I will, I do believe the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all sin. This is the first time I ever dared thus to write. I tremble lest I should say or write wrong. But thank my God it is true;—peace, joy, confidence and assurance are mine. All glory to my Saviour!"

Some may, perhaps, be disposed to question the reality of an experience such as this. They may set it down for the most part to excitement, or delusion. Had it been excitement it would soon have passed away; had it been delusion his

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after life would have testified thereto. But this was not the case. In his whole deportment and spirit there was nothing to contradict the above record. Of course he was not free from ignorance, mistake, infirmity and temptation. His chief besetment was a hasty temper, and he makes full acknowledgment that he sometimes found himself yielding, in the midst of trial and disappointment, to a spirit of momentary anger, or murmuring. But whenever this was the case, with a sorrowful heart, and earnest prayer, he hastened to God for strength and victory. If a tree is known by the fruit it bears, if it is fair to form any judgment of the quality of religion by the external life, then Thomas Dixon may be truthfully called a holy man. The exercise of faith in the atonement of Christ had brought him into the possession of purity: he was conscious of being no longer under the power of sin, but under the dominion of grace: he had yielded himself to God. It was an unreserved

surrender and he never withdrew it. For forty years he "reckoned himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Often fiercely assaulted by the adversaries of his soul, yet was he mercifully defended and preserved, and each attack seemed to bring him nearer, and in deeper humility, to Christ. He was tried as by fire; yet the flames did not destroy, but proved the genuineness of his love and devotion, and gave them a new beauty, and a brighter glow. It is not too much to say of him, as it is said of one of the purest and most lovely characters which the Bible contains, "he walked with God." Not with any lofty pharisaical feeling, but in his simplicity and conscious uprightness through the grace of Christ, he called himself "*a man of God.*" One of his characteristically quaint and favourite expressions, which he would, also, frequently write after his name in letters to his friends, was, "*on the high road to glory.*"

And verily that was where he walked. In his frequent and earnest prayers; in his diligent, and unwearied labours; in his abstinence, and self-denial; in his conversation so seasoned with grace; in the patience with which he bore trial; in the meekness with which he met opposition; and in the charity which he exercised toward all men, there was evidence unmistakeable, that he had found the way and his feet were standing in it, even the way of which it is written, "It shall be called the way of holiness."

Perhaps we cannot do better than transcribe some of his own unvarnished and simple words, to set forth the nature and degree of his piety. We will select more especially from two years which, it must be confessed, were the brightest and best of his life; but there is no necessity to confine ourselves to these two years, as similar records to those which they contain are found in his diary until the hand which wrote them could write no more.

1828. “*January 27.*—I am strongly tempted to give up my confidence ; but thank God, my heart is fixed,—going out after the fulness about which Lady Maxwell writes so beautifully. The means of grace are becoming increasingly wells of salvation to my soul.

“*February 24.*—I desire nothing but Christ, and every moment pray to be filled and garnished with the graces of the Holy Spirit. The salvation which I have astonishes me, so sweetly am I saved in the hour of temptation.

“*March 23.*—I feel myself increasingly near to God : my life is indeed ‘hid with Christ in God.’ Still I see before me a depth where I long to dive, to swim, to sink. I taste, but I want a feast, and always to be breathing the pure air.

“*April 28.*—Rose at five, for Carlton, Sudbrooke, and Barkstone. I have a strange glowing, burning, love for souls ; yet some of my own dear people can hardly bear so much zeal and earnestness.

*“ May 4.—*Rose at five, under a cloud. I wrestled, mourned, and believed until my Lord appeared. At the prayer meeting I bore my testimony against the players.

*“ May 8.—*Up at 4½, spent much time in prayer, where I found Him, whom my soul loveth, sweet, precious indeed. My soul melts and expands before my God: still I feel myself but a child, and know but little of the deep things of God. I want more of the spirit of that excellent Missionary, David Brainerd, whose life I am now reading.

*“ June 4.—*Lost an hour by a trick of Satan, which much grieved me.

*“ June 17.—*To-day my graces have been much tried; but thank God, none of these things move me.

*“ July 3.—*How sweetly were the words applied this morning, ‘Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.’

*“ July 25.—*To-day I have been testing myself, and asking why I believe I am living in a state of sanctification? My answer is I

feel the witness and assurance within. I love prayer, retirement, watching, fasting, reading, early rising, and the public means of grace. I have a constant desire for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, and victory over body and soul, self and sin. I have an entire trust in the merits and atonement of Christ, an increasing sense of God's presence, patience when sorely tried, and a holy longing for more of the mind of Christ.

*“August 6.—*A few of us are deeply grieved at the sad condition of Grantham, and resolve to give increased attention to its interests.

*“August 26.—*Perhaps I was more nice than wise, but I could not make up my mind to eat, at Bourne, the oven-baked dinner. Several of my class are now seeking the great salvation of God. I should like to have all my time and talents given to God's work and cause. Have just read Mr. Wesley's Life. How far he went in the way of holiness, and yet without true

spiritual life; surely I am not deceiving myself. I have been more earnestly searching my heart.

“*October 25.*—I never felt two hours pass away so sweetly in prayer. I pleaded my right to the fulness of God,—not by merit, yet if I am a son, why not have all the blessing of a child? My soul at once caught the sacred fire.

“*December 12.* A happy day in hearing Mr. Lessey from ‘The eagle stirring up her nest.’ The chapel seemed full of God. I am sweetly moving onwards, and upwards, amidst storms within and without. God is my refuge. I long for the teeming shower of grace.

1829. “*January 4.*—What a noble soul had the holy Mr. Fletcher! May his mantle fall on me! I am greatly tried; but the settling day is coming. I cannot please any at the expense of God’s favour.

“*January 18.*—God’s hand of affliction has touched me. For a few hours I was in an agony of pain. Heard — preach this

evening: a baptism from heaven would do us both good.

“*February* 28.—My poor town and country! How is sin in all its forms rolling along! And what is most painful, so many professors of religion are found diving into its depths secretly. Nothing in time or money is spared to set off the poor dying body; but where is the spirit of self-denial, taking up the cross, and following Christ?

“*March* 21.—Tea parties are seldom attended with much profit. I want to be nearer God. My enjoyments are mixed with trial, and wanderings, what can it mean? I know the blood of Christ still cleanses me from all sin.

“*April* 10.—These are high days for Satan. Old and young are drawn easily into folly and wickedness. I feel an unusual degree of the presence of God. I seem to be finishing my work; yet about this I am not at all concerned. My fixed purpose is to get and do all the good I can. I see much is yet to be done in my family, and around me.

“May 15.—Satan does desire to have me, and sift me as wheat : temptations roll like a tide ; but glory to God I am safe. Rose at 4½ ; self-denial and prayer are greatly blessed to me. I long for the rich fulness.

“June 17.—We are trying to divide the town for missionary collecting : what a work of mercy ! I am much led out for the fulness of the Spirit : I aim at nothing less, and desire nothing so much. Have felt depressed with a sense of worldly-mindedness, but at the prayer-meeting a tide of blessing carried it all away. Have just heard the Archdeacon—a charming voice and a fine mind. I have again been seeking up the lost by preaching in the streets twice—had many to hear, yet dull — ‘Can these dry bones live ?’ I am sorry to grieve some of my dear people by opposing their dress, show, and worldliness, in which I very seldom find the meek, patient, loving, humble, holy mind. Well, if I have fixed my standard, I believe it is a Bible one.

“August 2.—Rose at five. Prayed, and

fasted, as usual. Had some profitable conversation, yet I stayed too long.

“*September 7.*—A stir in our Missionary Committee: we begin to be ashamed of our dulness. I often wish I had a few holy souls, to whom I could open my heart, and whom I might imitate and follow. Some begin, but soon grow slack: Jesus, however, is my constant living example; Him I will follow. Been much blessed in reading Mr. Fletcher’s life: what a glass it is! Lord sanctify the sight!

“*November 17.*—In the midst of business hurry I have sweet peace: in my sleep I again have been wonderfully filled with God; and in two hours of wrestling prayer, I found in reality what was before but a dream. What a heaven of love I enjoy! Prayer is my soul’s delight; I should like to spend four hours every day in its exercise.

“*December 31.*—I now finish another year: it is true, of a good deal of trial, and loss of nearly £100—yet it has been by far the best year I ever saw for health of body

and soul. I don't know that I have had one murmuring thought, and have had constant peace with God in company and when alone. O sweet peace, how do I love thee, and am resolved to pursue thee! Glory be to God! May I never lose this precious peace. It has been a year, too, of delightful sacrifice and labour: preaching more than one hundred sermons; attending many Missionary Meetings; travelling hundreds of miles; visiting; business of my own; business of Circuit; tracts, arranging and distributing; collecting for Missions; attending two hundred prayer-meetings; hearing sixty sermons; leading classes; attending Leaders', Trustees', Missionary and other Committees; fasting every Friday; spending hours every day in private reading, and prayer, perhaps not less than 2,000 in the year; and yet, from and in my heart, I still say that I am an unprofitable and unworthy servant.

'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.'

My dependence is alone on Christ.

1831. "*September 16.*—I enjoy solid, and constant peace, which amid a thousand defects makes my life happy.

1838. "*June 3.*—My confidence in God as my Sanctifier, continues unshaken and uninterrupted. We have, too, a very blessed work going on both in the town and Circuit ; more than one hundred persons have been converted to God during the past nine weeks.

1843. "*August 9.*—A wonderful day for thunder and lightning! Such successive peals, travelling from south to north, enough to rend the very heavens ; the rain also falling in torrents ; but thank my God my soul was calm and quiet, sweetly centreing in Jesus. Praise Him ! All is well ! All is well !

1846. "*November 4.*—My soul sweetly lives and breathes in Jesus. I am longing for more of that heavenly fire which 'sets the kingdoms on a blaze.'

1848. "*January 20.*—My God sweetly covers me with His feathers, and hides me

as in a secret place. My spiritual stock does nicely increase.

1849. "*April 21.*—Poor Rush dies this day for his own great sins, with no hope of mercy; no one offers to die for him. I have been under a much heavier sentence, and have deserved to die eternally; but Christ interposed, and freely offered to die for me: so I am free, praise the Lord, I am free, and at liberty!

1854. "*February 18.*—Amidst depressing and discouraging influences, I am trusting and resting alone upon the precious atonement of Christ. No man ever needed that atonement more than I do.

1857. "*December 9.*—I still keep preaching a full salvation—a subject too little felt and known. It is thought by most to belong to ministers, and old age, not to youth and men of business. Well, thank God, I have had a little of it in both; and now that age is growing, love is increasing.

1859. "*August 24.*—While pleading for help in business, which I now specially need,

I have found great nearness to God, and a blessed baptism of the Holy Ghost. I at once renewed solemn engagements, and promises of entire devotedness to God and His cause. I long to bless everybody; the one as well as the thousand; the sinner as well as the saint. Come! Come my Lord! Fit my body by strength, and my soul by holy sanctity, that I may, like Samson, do more as I draw near the day of my death, than I have done in my long life.

1862. "*June 20.*—I have just been, for the first time of my life here of forty-four years, to the Grantham College, to witness the distribution of prizes. There was much talent and scholarship displayed, but more of God's presence was wanted. All this learning I should like to have with a deeper tone of piety. The learning I cannot have, but the piety thank God I have, and shall have more. Praise Him! Amen.

1865. "*February 18.*—O how I long to be as near to, and as much like, God as any man ever was or can be! I think the fact

that I am made willing to give up my business life for greater devotedness to God and His cause, is a proof that He will fulfil my desire."

We have given a larger number of extracts than we intended, but they will furnish the reader with all the more ample matter from which to judge for himself of the simple but deep piety of him of whom we write. It may be thought by some that he was too strict and puritanical in his views and conduct. Certainly he presents a strange contrast to many members of his own, as well as other sections, of the Christian Church. He was not afraid to oppose anything which savoured not of truth and God. He spoke out strongly against, and used his utmost endeavours to put down, popular worldly amusements, such as theatrical exhibitions, cricket-matches, steeple-chases, etc. He did this sincerely, not desiring to deprive any of enjoyment, but believing these things to be sources of

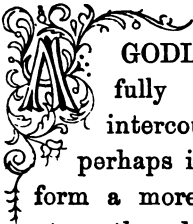
incalculable spiritual and moral injury. He never attended concerts, and respectfully declined invitations to public dinner parties. If he erred in any of these things, his error was on the safer side. The danger of professedly Christian people in these days is not, unfortunately, of becoming too much unlike the world, but of being too closely conformed thereunto. Better to be too strict than too lax. He that toucheth not, will not be defiled ; and if there were more of the thorough piety—for thoroughness was its distinctive characteristic—of Thomas Dixon, there would be more of a similar singularity, and watchers from the outside—godless and unconverted men—would more readily perceive the difference between those who fear the Lord and those who fear Him not.

CHAPTER V.

PRAYER.

“Thousands bewail a hero, and a nation mourneth for its king,
But the whole universe lamenteth the loss of a man of prayer.”

TUPPER.

 **A** GODLY life cannot be successfully pursued except frequent intercourse be held with God; and perhaps it would be impossible to form a more correct estimate of the strength and measure of a man's piety, than by the love he has to, and the power he has in, prayer. The barometer does not more truthfully indicate the state of the weather, than prayer reveals the state of the heart. Every eminently holy man has been a man eminent for prayer, and in the

nature of the case it must always be so. Godliness is God-likeness, and God-likeness is the direct result of intercourse with God. Moses' face shone with a more than human brightness when he came down from the Mount, having seen the Lord, and talked with Him there; and our life has more of the light and beauty of Heaven infused into it, as we ascend the steps of prayer, and commune with the Deity. The secret of that high state of grace to which Thomas Dixon attained, and in which he lived, is to be found in the habit which he cultivated, and the delight which he had in prayer.

His prayers were very simple. He seemed as though he were a child when on his knees, and talked with God as if he were as familiar with Him as a child is with its father. At the same time he was very reverent, and his attitude betokened it. He knelt with hands clasped, and eyes closed, evidently realising the solemnity of the exercise, and supplication was pictured in his face, as well

as breathing from his lips. He never could, nor did, use a form of prayer. His consciousness of want furnished him with language. It was the unstudied speech of a needy and solicitous soul which Heaven heard when He prayed. He was earnest in everything, but especially so in prayer. We have seen his strong frame tremble, as that of a man in agony, when he has been pleading with God for the quickening of the Church, and the salvation of souls.

One has said, "Let the day have a blessed baptism by giving your first waking thoughts into the bosom of your God. The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day." Thomas Dixon believed this, and sought the blessed baptism, not only at the commencement but throughout the day. He not only fixed the rudder but held it for the day by prayer. He found that

"That work which is begun well, is half done :
And without prayer no work is well begun."

Consequently everything furnished him with a subject for prayer. Nothing was accounted

too great or too insignificant to lay before the Lord. Did he under the influence of excitement speak hastily? This is how he writes about it—"I think I have slid into an error by defending myself with expressions too strong, and full of heat. I rose in the middle of the night, and laid my case before the Lord, who soon poured down the healing balm, after which I slept sweetly." Did affliction come upon his family? This is the way in which he treated it—"I could not prevent myself weeping, but I cried unto the Lord—Hast Thou forgotten me? In a moment the cheering reply was given 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.' This was quite enough, not a feeling of complaint could I utter, and my poor heart was filled with God." When, a few years before his death, he became partially deaf, he records—"This morning I have had a special inter-

view with the Trinity for help in my hearing ; closer walk with God ; the best way out of my business ; and two or three other important matters. My God drew very near. All will be right." He was troubled sometimes with what he terms "evil dreams," and thus he writes of them—"Satan found me last night when fast asleep and assailed me with distressing dreams. I was early up to plead for God's help, which soon came in that cheering passage, "If God be for us, who can be against us." At once my mind was calm, and my heart full of praise."

On November, 11th, 1846, he writes—"A fortnight back last Thursday, I was unusually drawn out in prayer for one special object—That God would spare my life to be zealously, fully, and successfully devoted to the great interests of His kingdom for twenty more years. I should then be $72\frac{1}{2}$ years of age. The thought of staying so long from my heavenly home for any other purpose would give me pain ; but if I can do good to a world of sinners, and

especially to my own town and Circuit, I will say, Praise the Lord.' It will be seen that those twenty years for which he thus besought the Lord were added to his life.

Perhaps there are few men of business, who have devoted more time to prayer than he did. The following is the manner in which each day was marked out :—"Seven hours to sleep ; eight to business ; three to family duties ; two-and-a-half to prayer ; and three-and-a-half to reading and public duties." Thus did he "redeem the time" day by day for forty years. When the premises which he occupied in Watergate were sold, and he was obliged to seek a home, and place of business elsewhere, he wrote, "My dear wife and I feel it much. Here we have spent near twenty-one years. Every room has been consecrated to God by prayer—never being on my knees less than twelve hours a week, while many months have been spent in reading and writing for God's cause. Showers of blessing have

fallen of every kind. And yet, go I must. Well, praise the Lord, I am not cast down ; I am in good hands. The Lord will provide and I therefore leave it."

He was not without some method in prayer. On the 3rd of August, 1830, he writes in his diary :—" Should I not have some order for private prayer ?—1st : For myself, in the removal of all evil. 2ndly : For all the mind of Christ and fulness of God. 3rdly : For wisdom and help as a husband, father, son, brother, master-tradesman, professor, leader, preacher, steward, Sunday-school teacher, trustee, member of Committees, and all other offices ; also for the world, mentioning about thirty parts of it ; for the Church and its ministers ; for my wife and the members of both our families ; for my class and special cases ; and persons laid on my heart." He adds to this record in 1862, " And this plan I have pursued until now—prayer, more especially for self and family, being the first business of each morning ; and at 9 o'clock for penitents

and backsliders; at 11½, for more faith and pity for poor sinners; at 2, for self and neighbours; at 5½, for self and the Church; at 8, for family and class; and at 10, for self again." In addition to this he would frequently call his men and apprentices together, immediately after breakfast, for prayer and reading of the Scriptures, before they resumed their work. The seven o'clock Sunday morning prayer-meeting was to him a favourite means of grace. It was, and is still, conducted in the large vestry adjoining the Grantham Wesleyan Chapel and we never knew him to be absent from it, except when ill or away from town. As regularly as the light of the Sabbath came, might he be seen wending his way along the hushed and quiet streets to this much-neglected, though oft-times blessed and invaluable religious service. It was the same, too, with the Prayer-meeting conducted at the same place, every Monday evening at seven o'clock. He was always there ready to join his voice with

the voices of God's people in making supplication unto Him.

Of the great delight he had in prayer, some opinion may be formed from the following few and brief extracts from his journal.

1831. "*June 10.*—Thank God, my love to souls, and holy longings for all the fulness are increasing. The sad condition, moral and spiritual, of the people in the villages makes me still wish to be wholly devoted to their interests, but as I cannot do that, I intend to give a few evenings to the near places. Have found in Manthorpe-Street more than one hundred attentive hearers. God has so poured out upon me the spirit of pleading that until midnight I was found wrestling with Him. The burden of my cry was for more of God's blessing on myself and labours.

1847. "*December 4.*—I have had painful forebodings of a day of trial: I hastened to God with earnest pleadings, when I

was sweetly met, and our re-union was increasingly pledged.

1850. "*October 18.*—Have had a most blessed day in preaching. Before breakfast I had two hours' most special influence and power with God.

1853. "*August 20.*—Another week of trial which drives me to God very early in the morning for hours together.

1860. "*January 3.*—I feel much for my family: I am anxious indeed to have them with me in heaven. While pleading hard and long God spoke, to my perfect satisfaction, this precious truth—'I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.'

1864. "*October 17.*—In wrestling prayer my God came down in His own sweet melting promises and precious presence, covering me with His mantle of pure and perfect love."

To this duty of prayer he joined the duty of fasting. This he did for fifty years,

on every Friday, and often on other days. We once gave him offence by questioning him in a meeting, where the subject of fasting was being discussed, on the nature of his fasts, imagining that they consisted merely in abstinence from animal food. We were glad, however, to find that this supposition was a mistaken one.

Enough has been written we hope, or more evidence might be adduced to show that Thomas Dixon loved and practised prayer. It is not surprising that he won the respect of even the godless around him, and that, frequently, in the midst of their afflictions and difficulties, they sent for him to pray with them. They well knew he was accustomed to hold converse with God. Would that the number of such men were multiplied ! It would be foolish to attempt to imitate the singularities and eccentricities of his character. It would be foolish to attempt to map out a plan of life similar to that which he pursued. Every man after his own order ; yet there is not

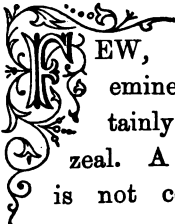
one whose eye may chance to fall upon these pages, who would not do well to cultivate a like spirit of simple but earnest prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

Z E A L.

"THE world has got so matter-of-fact now, that it jostles the genius off the footpath ; while the plodder whose eye sparkles less brilliantly, but more evenly and longer, steadily proceeds on his way to success."—

PUNSHON.

EW, probably, ever rose to eminence in anything, and certainly none in religion, without zeal. A slothful and indolent man is not commonly either happy or prosperous, and cannot be a Christian. Love to God and souls, which is the sum and substance of religion, cannot live unless, as far as opportunity may serve, it is allowed to manifest itself in zealous effort. As a natural consequence, too, it follows that the higher the standard of religious life, the more zeal will there be

for the glory of God, and the welfare of men. Show me a man who lives in Christ and I will show you a man who labours for Christ. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is ever the cry of one whom God has awakened, and to whom he has revealed Himself, and to such no effort becomes wearisome and no sacrifice is accounted too great.

No sooner had Thomas Dixon yielded his heart to God, than he yielded to Him his life. Even before he obtained the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, he worked in the Church with commendable earnestness. Herein he has left a good example. It has been well written—

"Art thou dejected? Is thy mind o'ercast?
To chase thy gloom—'Go, fix some weighty truth :
Chain down some passion ; do some gen'rous good ;
Teach ignorance to see, or grief to smile ;
Correct thy friend : befriend thy greatest foe.'"

One of the very best possible means of clearing away doubts and darkness from the mind is to set vigorously to work, and endeavour to do good. Thomas Dixon did

this; but after the blessing of pardon became consciously his, he did it more abundantly. His life then became one constant flame of zeal.

It was not a fitful zeal. He was not earnest to-day, and indolent to-morrow. The freshness of his first love was retained. We never knew him when he had not a passion for souls, and when he would not gladly break away from business engagements if he could be the means of doing good. Nothing gave him such gladness as to hear of the prosperity of God's cause, whether in his own town or elsewhere; and though he mourned as he thought of the sins of the people, yet his heart filled with joy as he remembered the power of the Gospel to overcome them. Here is a characteristic record:—"April 27, 1844. I am increasingly resolved to serve in the Church, and, if possible, to make this world better. Just now there is much alarm about this Maynooth bill. The nation is all action to prevent it pass-

ing, which is quite right; yet I have no fear of the return of Popery. Truth has got too fast hold of the public to be beaten down and stopped by idolatry and superstition. Besides, God's people are in the gap, with cries, tears, and earnest pleadings. If John Knox could shake a nation and make a monarch tremble, what have we to fear, with thousands of such-like men? There is a grand Protestant feeling in the nation, which, when aroused, will defend itself like its fathers—to blood and to death. The best of all is, God is with us.”

This was the right spirit to cultivate, and he ever seemed to possess it. Neither the sins of his nation nor his neighbours weakened his confidence in the truth, but served only to quicken his zeal in seeking to propagate that truth. He would sometimes say, “It seems impossible to save men, but the grace of God can do it.” And it was his simple trust in the power of that grace which encouraged and stimulated him in the midst of his labours.

He made himself busy in everything which pertained to the welfare of the Church of his choice. The assembling of the Ministers in their annual Conference was always an event of great interest to him, especially if there were to be a change in the Ministers of his Circuit. He loved to slip away to Conference that he might have two or three days of "religious feasting," in hearing sermons, speeches, etc. He was a regular attendant on the means of grace. No public service was held at the Wesleyan chapel to which, if possible, he did not come. It was a sermon to see him listening to a sermon, so attentive and earnest was he to feed upon the truth. He sat in the house of the Lord a living comment on the Psalmist's words, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth." His zeal prompted him to works of the most varied kind.

Let us endeavour to classify them.

1. He took great delight in visiting,

especially the sick and dying. Immediately after his conversion he entered upon this work, and we have soon the following record: "In visiting, God has made me the means of bringing one of the chief of sinners into the fold. May God keep the poor man." He visited often a great number of families in a day, and frequently found his visits to be a blessing to himself as well as others. Let the following taken from his journal illustrate this :—

1836. "*July 20.*—I am visiting the sick, the wretched, and the dying, for whom my sympathies have been greatly excited. Nearly 100 of these families have I just seen which could hardly be exceeded for poverty and darkness.

1855. "*September 7.*—In visiting the sick I have just found myself in the presence of the King of kings. We do indeed live sweetly together.

1857. "*February 2.*—Visited many Roman Catholics, to whom I strongly

recommended Jesus, rather than the Priest, or the Virgin Mary.

1862. "*May* 10.—Yesterday I visited many families ; found some soldiers, whom I directed to Christ ; and one poor dying woman, who could only say, 'It is too late : the fiat is fixed.'"

His visits were not confined to his own neighbourhood. Wherever he went he took delight in this work. In doing good he needed not that any one should find employment for him, but readily procured it for himself, and among utter strangers soon made himself known and noted for his zeal. Thus of a visit which he paid to Lichfield, he writes, "I laboured hard in going from house to house, praying and preaching ; and the landlady of the Inn at which we stayed seemed pleased with our conversation and prayer."—And of a visit which he made to the seaside for the benefit of his health, he records :—"I laboured hard amongst the visitors and fishermen, and should have

done much more, in preaching, etc., but my kind host would not allow me. My tracts, however, flowed freely."

2. He believed in the power of religious tracts circulated amongst the people; and for many years had the entire management of the Wesleyan Tract Society for Grantham and the Circuit in his own hands. This involved not a little toil, which will readily be understood when it is stated that Grantham Circuit embraces some thirty villages. He had to procure the tracts; to call a number of ladies together to sew them in covers; to number and arrange them for distribution, to find distributors and assign them a suitable district in which to work, and then in the best way he could to obtain the money for the payment of them. The writer looks back with thankfulness on many happy hours spent with him in the preachers' vestry, where the tracts were kept, sorting out bundles and tying them up for the different districts. There were

180 districts ; and as a new parcel of tracts was required every six months, it left no time for the tract manager to suffer his hands to hang down in idleness.

He dealt very largely in handbill tracts, many of which were written by himself. We give a specimen at the end of this Memoir. When the Grantham annual fair was held—a time which he greatly dreaded for the sake of the younger members of the Church,—or, when any circus, or theatre was opened for a short time in the town—institutions against which he invariably raised a public protest, and sent a requisition to the Mayor of the Borough that they should not be allowed—these handbill tracts were distributed by hundreds. At all times, too, he took care to have a full supply of them in his inner coat pocket. Probably he never went out without some of them. If he travelled by rail, the passengers in the same compartment with him were soon well supplied with tracts, and out went a bundle through the carriage window if a

number of men were discovered at work upon the line. To all his village preaching appointments he was careful to take them with him, leaving a number at cottages by the way side; and generally, whether on foot or riding in his gig, coming to a full stop if he met any person to whom he thought a tract might be acceptable, or the means of doing good. He had a happy knack of presenting these tracts which perhaps it would be difficult to imitate. He did it in such a cheerful, simple, and evidently well-intentioned manner that the most surly found it almost impossible to be offended at the offer, or to refuse its acceptance. There can be little doubt that in this way, scattering the seed of the kingdom broadcast, and sowing beside all waters, he laboured not in vain.

3. The Sunday-School was a favourite scene of toil. He first entered the Grant-ham Sunday-school as a teacher in 1844, and continued a regular and earnest worker in it for the remainder of his life.

The above school numbered then, as now, about 400 scholars, and required a man of some tact rightly to govern it. Mr. Dixon was soon advanced by the vote of his fellow teachers to the office of Superintendent, which office he retained to the end of his days. It is pleasing to note that one of his nephews now occupies the position necessarily rendered vacant by his death. How he won and retained the affections of the scholars might readily be shown from the willing testimony of hundreds who attended the School during the course of the more than twenty years he was connected with it. We never heard of so much as one who spoke against him. His thorough kindness and simplicity made them all his friends, the youngest among them feeling that they could run to him as to a father, certain of being welcomed with a smile, and of receiving some words of encouragement. He took great delight in anything which tended to increase the happiness of the children. At

the time of the annual "Treat" he might be seen to advantage among them. There was always much to do in the way of preparation for these occasions, and none busied themselves to make ready more than he. It was as high a day for him as for any of the children when they were taken by boat to Woolsthorpe, or led up Hall's Hill to gather round Mrs. Allen's house, and sing some pretty pieces, which soon had the effect of bringing the good lady out with baskets of nuts, apples, and oranges, ready for distribution when the singing had ceased. Mr. Dixon became a child among children then. He marched about the field with them, laughed as they did, and, to all appearance, enjoyed their childish sports as much as any of them. Many who have come to years of maturity cannot but bless the memory of the man in connection with their Sunday-school life.

4. He was a Class-Leader for fifty-two years. The first class to which he was

appointed, met at Tanvats in the Fens, four miles from Bardney. He commenced with eight members, but soon increased the number to seventeen. Of the meetings which they held he speaks as "most encouraging, and means of great spiritual consolation and revival." When he came to Grantham, it was not long before a number of members were placed under his charge, and towards the latter part of his life he had as many as three classes, each of which he met regularly once a week. This was, of course, too much for any man. It was exacting too great labour, and involving too great responsibility. The Grantham Methodist Society, as many others are now doing, felt the lack of suitable men with whom to entrust the spiritual oversight of its members, and hence this too heavy burden. Sweet to every soul bent on the attainment of a high standard of Christian experience is the communion of saints; and whenever Thomas Dixon met a Class, at least two very necessary

things for its profitableness and success were insured,—the absence of useless formalism, and the presence of religious earnestness and life. He was at home in a Class-meeting, and sought to make every member feel the same. He spoke with simplicity, with gentleness, and with fidelity. His members rejoiced to assemble with him in Christian fellowship, and gladly received encouragement and counsel from his lips.

5. He took great interest in the erection of new chapels, schools, etc., and in the improvement of Methodist property generally, throughout his Circuit. In 1839, the Grantham Chapel having become too small for the number of hearers, and persons desirous to be hearers, the Society began with all earnestness to bestir itself in seeking a suitable site, and devising means for the immediate erection of a new and more commodious place of worship. He thus writes on the subject :—

August 30, 1839. "A new chapel is now the great absorbing business amongst us. The plot of ground and premises on which to build it have been obtained by the special guidance of God Himself. For several years we have felt our need; but saw no way except by the purchase of an old house, adjoining the present chapel, which has at length been offered for far more than its value; yet, for such a purpose, we offered within £10 of the sum required, and were allowed a fortnight to consider. Just before the time had passed, it occurred to our good brother and trustee, Mr. Rogers, that the adjoining premises, belonging to Mr. Langwith, might be obtained. He and I at once, therefore, made the application, and were very kindly received. In the course of two or three days, the bargain was made and the whole secured; to the sad disappointment of the owner of the other property, but to the gain of our Society, and to thousands yet unborn in Grantham and its neighbourhood. Praise the Lord!"

We soon find his brother David and himself in earnest search for suitable plans. They visited Lincoln and Boston ; at the latter of which places a new Wesleyan chapel was then in course of erection. The plans for this chapel admirably accorded with their notions of the kind of building required, and, when laid before the remaining friends at Grantham, were highly approved. It was soon decided, therefore, that the new chapel at Grantham should be built upon the model of that at Boston. He at once threw time, influence, and money into the movement ; his heart being fully set on it. A meeting was held, and before the plans were finished £900 were promised. On Monday March 23rd, 1840, the first stone was laid. Thomas Dixon was requested by the Society to overlook the work. This subjected him at times to some unpleasantness with the contractor ; but he sought to do his duty faithfully. In the early part of 1841 the chapel was finished ; and as he remarks in

his journal "a more neat and commodious set of buildings for Divine Worship, including chapel vestries, and large Sunday-school, could scarcely be found." Very glad and thankful was he when the anxiety and toil in connection with its erection were at an end. He had worked hard, prayed much, given all he could; and after dwelling with gratitude on the great liberality which had been manifested, and the very gracious and hallowing influences which had attended the opening services, he concludes his record of the event thus—"I feel that in many things—in my own business, and in visiting, reading, etc., the time has been a great loss. Am now, however, setting to work again in my usual way. May God be with and bless me."

Having devoted so much time and attention to the erection of the chapel, he afterwards felt all the more strongly attached to it; and in the several efforts which were subsequently made for its internal improvement, the introduction of an organ,

and the reduction of the heavy debt which had unavoidably been left upon it, he took a prominent part. Most vigorously did he work in arranging for and conducting various public meetings, bazaars, etc.; and though always glad when one was over, he was ever ready to throw his whole soul into the work of preparation for another. Perhaps it was a weakness on his part that he always liked to be foremost in works of this kind; but it was necessary that some one should occupy that position, and it might have been difficult to find one more worthy, and certainly one more willing could not have been found, to take the lead than himself.

In 1859, it was resolved to erect commodious Wesleyan Day-schools at Grantham; and here again, together with the Ministers of the Circuit, his brother David, and the good and generous-hearted friend of Methodism—Mr. Hornsby (who laid the foundation-stone)—we find him hard at work. It was the same with every chapel and school built throughout the Circuit. It seemed as

if nothing could be done in the way of new erections or improvements, but he must have a share in it; and glad enough the friends were in every place and at every time to receive his help. On one occasion when a village chapel was to be erected, he hit upon a somewhat novel expedient for obtaining funds. It is usual to have one lady, or gentleman, to lay the foundation-stone, but instead of this he proposed that forty ladies should lay forty stones at the same time, and, for this purpose furnished each of them with a mahogany mallet. Of course each lady was expected after going through the ceremony of laying the stone, to put something upon it, and not less than £1. It is needless to say, the plan answered well.

6. He held every office which a Methodist layman can do in a Circuit. Those who are best acquainted with the working of Methodism will best understand the amount of labour this entailed upon him. He was

Circuit-steward four times ; Chapel-steward ; Society-steward ; Collector of pew rents for thirty years ; Local-Preacher ; Class-Leader ; Secretary of Local - Preachers' Meeting ; Secretary of Quarterly Meeting ; Secretary of Leaders' Meeting ; Treasurer of Local-Preachers' Fund ; Secretary and joint Treasurer of Home-Mission Fund ; Secretary and joint Treasurer of Centenary Fund ; Secretary and joint Treasurer of Chapel Building Fund ; Secretary of Ingoldsby, Londonthorpe, Foston, and Gelston chapels ; Trustee of fifteen chapels ; Sunday-school Treasurer ; and Secretary and Treasurer of Tract Society. In 1864, at a special Trustee-Meeting, he was presented with a copy of Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary, and Wesley's Hymns, both very handsomely bound, as an expression of their very high appreciation of his labours in the services of the Church, extending over a period of upwards of forty years. Of this he says, "I feel greatly honoured by this first gift : yet the tone of expression, and real godly feeling,

were much above the present. Thanks to my very kind friends, and more to my God."

7. He attended nearly every Missionary Meeting, besides many other public meetings, conducted in his Circuit. It mattered not in what village the meeting was to be held, what the distance, or what the state of the weather, his presence was looked for as a matter of course. He had a stock of speeches always on hand, ready for every occasion, and so no matter what the object of the Meeting might be, he was sure to say something good, quaint, and pleasing to the people.

8. He was not indifferent to the welfare of the town in which he lived. He attended many of its public Meetings, and filled several offices, *e. g.*, Treasurer of the British School, Member of the Burial Board, Guardian of the Poor, etc. It is worthy of remark, too, that he was at one time

the Secretary of the Grantham Temperance Society, and always took an interest in the cause of total abstinence. When it is remembered that besides all this he had his own business to attend to, and that it was often very perplexing, and always required considerable time and attention, it will be admitted that he was a man who beyond all question had put on zeal as a cloak.

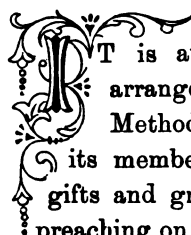
Had he not been regular in his habits ; a man of order ; an early riser ; keeping under his body by fasting, and by abstinence from all intoxicating drinks ; and had he not also been full of love to God and souls, he never could, nor would, have done his work.

CHAPTER VII.

PREACHING.

"The proud he tam'd, the penitent he cheer'd,
Nor to rebuke the rich offender fear'd !
His preaching much, but more his practice wrought,
A living sermon of the truths he taught."

DRYDEN.

T is an admirable and necessary arrangement in the Wesleyan Methodist connexion, that those of its members who have the requisite gifts and grace, shall be employed in preaching on the Sabbath day. By this means a large amount of useful talent is called into exercise, and, but for the adoption of this method, a great and important part of the working of Methodism could not be carried out. It is in such a Circuit as Grantham that the advantage of the arrange-

ment is more especially seen. The spiritual wants of the large number of villages surrounding that town could not possibly be met by the appointed Circuit ministers, and were it not for these "Local-preachers"—a name which sufficiently indicates the nature of their work,—the people in these villages must be shut out altogether from Methodist preaching. It is true these men have not received any formal ordination to their work, but before they can enter upon it, they are required to give a clear account of their conversion to God, and to declare their belief in the inward promptings of the Holy Spirit to engage therein. Their theological knowledge is subjected to an examination ere they begin, and their character once every quarter. It is no new thing that men should be so employed. In Apostolic times it was very much the same. Unordained men—except as ordained by the Holy Ghost, and that is the best of all ordinations,—went forth and preached the word. Such were the men of "Cyprus and

Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Every Wesleyan Minister comes from the ranks of these Local-preachers. Of their usefulness, and of the ability of many of them there can be no doubt. They have no pecuniary fee or reward. Their work is done gratuitously, and from the writer's experience the best class of Local-preachers is found, not in cities or large towns, but in such Circuits as Grantham, where they have abundant scope for the use and development of their gifts. For more than fifty years Thomas Dixon was a Local-preacher. His first attempt was made at Hatton, near Horn-castle, on the 10th November, 1816. "It was amid a thousand fears," he writes, "but with them there was the 'woe if I preach not.'" The style of his preaching was, as may naturally be supposed from his general character, very simple and plain,

but on that account it was none the less acceptable and beneficial to those who heard him. His clear and powerful voice was a great help to him. He spoke, apparently, without any effort, and so that every member of his congregation could not but hear and understand. Grammatically he committed but few errors, though never making any pretence whatever to perfection in that respect. His language, often striking and quaint, was generally the language of common every-day life. He stood in the pulpit with reverence, but evidently brimful of godly earnestness and fire. He seldom wrote his sermons, but bestowed all the thought he could upon a text before venturing to preach from it. He has, however, left a few rough sketches of sermons, from which we select one, and insert at the end of this Memoir.

He preached very frequently. Scarcely a Sabbath passed without finding him "holding forth the word of life" to some congregation. Often did he preach four or

five times in one day ; and in addition to his own Sabbath appointments was frequently on the week day taking the work of some sick minister, or preaching in connection with some special services.

Of the delight which he had, and of the zeal which he manifested in this work, let the following extracts from his diary testify.

1830. "*August 9.* I found an unusual baptism from on high richly poured out while preaching at Woolsthorpe, Sproxton, and Skillington. Had much liberty, great attention, and a good feeling.

1831. "*May 3.* Having lost my means of riding to my far appointments, I have had to walk sixty miles to my last three ; still I cheer myself up, and shall try to get through.

1838. "*August 26.* Preached in Sand-pit-lane at 9 o'clock, chapel 10½, and at Sudbrooke, 2½, 4, and 6. I am no worse for work yet should be glad to see more fruit.

1843. "*January 16.* I am very poorly

in body, yet I ventured to walk through the snow to Woolsthorpe and back. Have suffered much through the night for it, but I am glad I went.

1843. "*September 16.* Last Sunday I preached three times out of doors, and once in the chapel. All I suffered was a little hoarseness, which the walking and visiting many families served to increase.

1856. "*May 18.* At Colsterworth at 2½, felt dull and low; at Witham at 6, where I had more liberty, with only eight adults to hear me, after twenty-two miles of travelling in the pelting rain and piercing cold, and no home for tea, the friends being out; yet I did my work, and returned praising God, and am well this morning in body and mind.

1866. "*October 13.*—My age and infirmities compel me to give up part of my public work. Well, thank God for about sixty years' labour, in which I have preached at least 5,000 sermons and travelled full 50,000 miles, and never neglected one

appointment. To God I give all the glory.”

Perhaps few persons are able to say of themselves what Thomas Dixon has said of himself in this last record. Never, during the long time that he was a Local-preacher, to have missed one appointment, although the distances were often great, and he knew that in some of the places the congregation would be but small is to say the least of it, exemplary and praiseworthy in a more than ordinary degree. In addition to this, however, he often took the appointments of others,—his fellow Local-preachers,—who were either too lame or too lazy to take them themselves. The Ministers of the Circuit knew to whom they might safely apply in a case of emergency, consequently a large share of officiating for his brethren fell to his lot. He very often preached out of doors, and when he did so generally managed to attract a good congregation, and to command

the respectful and earnest attention of his hearers.

He frequently met with hard fare in his preaching, especially during the Reform agitation, when many of those who had long been friendly and hospitable, closed their doors against him, and he had to take his dinner in his pocket, and eat it by the way-side.

He did not preach in vain. God made the word, as it came from his lips, mighty to the salvation of souls. Thus we frequently find in his journal such passages as the following :—

1828. “ *April 6.*—Much encouraged by hearing that three persons were brought to God the last time I was at Eaton, and are now meeting in class.

1832. “ *October 13.*—I still find special visits from the Lord ; body and soul affected with strong feeling for the sad condition of man, and the more so when I see the wonderful love of Christ rejected by him.

Thank God ! six precious souls were saved in the Prayer-meeting at Ponton after the sermon.

1838. "*September 2.*—Preached in Well-Lane at 9 o'clock ; many heard with attention. At Gonerby, 2½, 4, and 6 ; at the Prayer-meeting, six persons professed to obtain the blessing of pardon."

In the early part of his preaching career he walked to his appointments and though this often involved a trudge of some thirty miles, besides preaching three times in one day, he seldom felt much worse for it. Towards the latter part of his life, however, it became too great a tax upon his strength, and he felt it necessary to provide himself with a pony and gig for the purpose of conveying him to them. It was a queer little animal—that pony—in colour almost like a magpie. Taffy he called it, and so familiar did the people in the villages become with its pace and style, that long before it came in sight they could tell

with tolerable accuracy who and what were on the road. It was really a treat to see him driving out to preach. Nothing could have a much more primitive appearance. There he sat, with his large umbrella before him, which had lost its original colour, and become a faded brown in the service of the Lord; his whip, which often fell, though making but little impression upon poor Taffy's back, held loosely in his hand; his rug wrapped closely round his knees; his great coat buttoned up to his chin; a blue-spotted handkerchief tied around his neck; his broad-brimmed hat half burying his head. Rain, hail, snow, blow,—it was all the same; away he went, singing and praising God from the beginning to the end of the journey. It was always fine weather with Thomas Dixon when he had a preaching appointment. Duty was delight; service was song; and to have the privilege of proclaiming the Gospel made him impervious to the piercing cold, and insensible to the wild moaning of the



wintry winds. Though out all hours of the night, and often in very lonely parts, only on one occasion, when returning from an appointment, was he insulted. He thus records it :—

1863. “*October 12.*—Last night in returning from Bottesford I was met by four or five young men, whose spirit, language, and acts were only suitable for such as had escaped from an asylum, or were under the maddening influence of drink. I said not a word, but endeavoured to drive my pony on, when one of them followed, and with some weapon struck hard to break my head, and would have done so had not my hat and the kind providence of God prevented it. Praise the Lord—all is well! I wrote to the newspaper office stating the facts.”

It has been said that “if a preacher would retain freshness and power in his work he must read.” We do not consider Thomas Dixon a perfect model of a Method-

ist Local-preacher, but he had learnt what it would be well if all would do who undertake to preach,—the importance and advantage of reading. We have now before us a list of some hundreds of books which he had read, upon each of which for his own benefit he wrote a short and pithy critique. Some of the remarks he makes on these books are interesting. Take the following as examples :—

James's Earnest Ministry.—"It is a real, soul-stirring work, and much needed."

Memoir of Dr. Chalmers.—"He was a wonderful man, but one volume would have been far better than two. With all his greatness he was many years before he got to Christ. How different to many a poor plough-boy who comes to Christ without any difficulty."

Hallam's Middle Ages.—"Very dry."

Kirk's Mother of the Wesleys.—"Full of interest, and does very great credit to the head and heart of the writer."

But while he was fond of reading others, and well capable of appreciating them, *THE BOOK* was ever first and foremost with him. It was his custom to read a portion of it every morning, with some eminent commentator's remarks thereupon. By this means *Benson's Commentary on the Old and New Testament* was read, and in 1861 he commenced the reading of *Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary* in like manner. He also employed much of his time in writing, which aided him considerably in the acquisition of language for his work of preaching. For many years he kept an account of the members of the Methodist Society in the Grantham Circuit, and when any of them died, the event called forth a brief history of their life and character from his pen. Some of these sketches of the departed are exceedingly well drawn, and, were this the place to introduce them, they might probably prove a source of melancholy pleasure to many. But they were written for his own benefit and doubtless he often found it

profitable to review his own record of good and holy men and women who had passed from the same sphere of labour to their reward before him. It will thus be seen that he was not indifferent to preparation for the pulpit. He sought, as a Local-preacher, to shew himself "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed;" and though his piety and earnestness were the secret of his power, the cultivation of his talents tended to develop that power and to secure larger success in his work.

CHAPTER VIII.

FORTITUDE.

“Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there : save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me.”—ST. PAUL.



CHRISTIAN fortitude, it is said, may be defined as “that state of mind which arises from truth, and confidence in God, enables us to stand collected and undisturbed in the time of difficulty and danger, and is at an equal distance from rashness on the one hand and pusillanimity on the other.” Accepting this definition we cannot but perceive its necessity. A man destitute of it must be a stranger to the happiness of human life, and utterly unable rightly to

discharge its duties. It is in the weakness of this principle among Christian men that we may find the cause of much of their stumbling and many of their sorrows. Let an individual be the possessor of Christian fortitude, and he will be able to adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." No matter what dangers may beset his path, what difficulties may be in his way, or what trials may fall to his lot, he will not be turned aside by them, but, they will rather serve to develop his character and raise the standard of his life. It may be thought by some that fortitude is constitutional, dependent on firmness of nerves and strength of spirits. Undoubtedly it is so, in part ; yet it may be acquired by principle, and strengthened by reason, and it is only when thus acquired and strengthened that it can be called a virtue.

Thomas Dixon happily possessed a considerable amount of Christian fortitude, and his life furnishes many instances in which

it was severely put to the test. He was no stranger to trial and difficulty. God gave him this evidence, among others, of His love to him, inasmuch as he suffered him often to be brought into circumstances where the strength, or weakness, of his courage and confidence must be made manifest. Let us see how he conducted himself, and what sort of spirit he exhibited under such circumstances.

1. Business often brought trial. He began as a tradesman with but £10 in his pocket; but, in spite of repeated rebuffs, forced his way upward. As we have already seen, he foolishly became surety for professed friends and had to smart for it; yet this, trying as it was, occasioned but little sadness, and that little never lasted long. Sometimes in common with others he found the state of trade to be anything but prosperous; at other times the number of bad debts in his books became large, still, we find no murmuring, or, if it does slightly betray itself,

it is immediately checked by a declaration of his confidence in God and the assurance that "all will be made right in the end." In 1852, as previously noted, the premises he had occupied for twenty-one years were sold, and he was obliged to quit. No place offered, but one, which, as he expresses it, "was much out of the way, and where his trade would be certain to diminish;" yet he writes, "I am consoled with the pleasing thought that if I have less business I have less care, and more time for soul matters, and the cause of God."

2. Affliction visited his family. On the 26th of June, 1820, his wife gave birth to a son, which to his great grief lived but three weeks. On the 9th of February, 1822, his daughter Eliza was born. She grew up a fragile but beautiful and amiable girl. Her gentleness and sweetness of disposition endeared her to all who knew her. With a father's fondest love did he watch over her, and with a father's anxiety, too, for many a

dark shadow passed over the spirit of his joy, as he perceived the feebleness of her physical strength and the likelihood that her days upon the earth would be but few. She had several severe attacks of sickness ; but recovering, and her health being much improved, on the 2nd of April, 1845, she became the wife of William Sneath. Her married life, however, was but brief. That deceitful and stealthy disease which lurks beneath so many of the fairest human forms, began to give unmistakeable evidences of its existence, encroaching more and more rapidly, until on Friday, August 14, 1846, the light of Eliza's life went out. This, if anything, might have been expected to bow down the spirit of the father ; but he received the stroke without complaint, and declared that an hour's conversation he had with her some time before she died, and in which she declared her full confidence in Christ, was an hour of such perfect satisfaction and delight as he had never previously spent. We cannot forbear inserting a

letter which he wrote to her a few days before she left this wearying world for the bright inheritance of saints.

“MY VERY DEAR CHILD,

“To say that I love you is a little thing ; your interest in every sense is mine, and is deeply imprinted on my heart. Twenty-four years you have been the special subject of my prayers, and I should be thankful for the hope of twenty-four more such years. I had looked forward to your being a comfort to your mother and myself in our declining life, but now that cannot be. Shall I ask what shall I do ? Do ? Why sink into God’s right and perfect will and fully say, ‘ Let Him do as seemeth Him good.’ Oh bless Him ! I mean to meet you. You will be too pure to come to me, but I shall come to you, and this will soon be. And now, fear not ; God is with you ; the prospect is brightening ; you are going home where you will be quite welcome. Oh ! how sweet the thought, so near home. Shall I ask your return ? Nay !

“ You say you have not much comfort, but solid peace. Well, thank God for that:— confidence is our work, comfort is the Lord’s.

“ And now I commend you to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who, I am sure, will take care of you and conduct you safely to glory.

“ From your sorrowful, but truly happy,
FATHER.”

In the September of this same year he was called upon to witness the departure of his beloved mother. She finished her course with joy at the age of seventy-three; and he buried her, blessing God for the prospect of soon seeing her again.

But the heaviest stroke was yet to fall. His wife, notwithstanding her robust appearance, was for many years a great sufferer; so much so, indeed, that on several occasions her medical attendants had been doubtful of her recovery. For some considerable time previous to her death she was confined

to her room. Although she attained eventually to a good old age, her frequent sufferings were a source of great anxiety to her husband; yet in the midst of them he never complained, but sought to put upon them the best construction, and often expressed his thankfulness that she had been spared to him so long. At length the great trial came. On the night of the 8th of August, 1864, after enduring great pain throughout the day, without a sigh or a struggle, she died. In recording the melancholy fact a few days after, he writes, "At once I retired for prayer, and could not but bless God for her happy release." A strange sense of loneliness now came over him; he realised all the bitterness of bereavement; yet his fortitude secured him against being "overcome of overmuch sorrow," while frequent communion with God brought consolation and strength to his soul.

3. Personal affliction, especially during the last eight or ten years of his life, fell to

his lot. Of this, however, we have already written and shall say more in a subsequent chapter ; suffice it here to observe that the same spirit of fortitude which had been manifested in the midst of the sufferings of his family, showed itself and produced perfect resignation to the Divine will, "when it was given him to suffer."

4. The greatest of his trials, however, were those which came upon him through his connection with the Church, owing to the great and almost painful interest he took in her welfare and prosperity, and it is in these that his courage and confidence in God were most displayed. When the cry of penitent souls was not heard, and when a spirit of lethargy and worldliness had found its way among the people of God, he was certain to be cast down. Nothing was looked upon with such a jealous eye, and held in such estimation by him, as the cause of God. Even personal and family matters were made secondary to it. He often writes

in a very mournful strain of the cause of God being "low;" but it is pleasing and not uninstructional to see, how, almost invariably, before he finishes the record, his mournful strain melts into one of cheerfulness and hope. Take the following in illustration: "The Circuit is low; everything in the Church seems dull; our Ministers are gone; there is much complaining; but, I mean to obey my Lord, who saith 'What is that to thee, follow thou Me.' Oh! what work there is to be done, yet we have a fine band of men able to work. If the heart be only touched with holy fire, then away we go hard and long."

In 1849 the movement known by the name of "Reform" commenced. It was undoubtedly the most terrible blow that has ever been struck at Wesleyan Methodism. Many of her staunchest friends feared it would prove fatal: and, it is not improbable that some would have rejoiced even if it had. Disastrous as the consequences were, however, this evil was happily averted. "The



rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon her; and she fell not," but stands to-day, the joy and pride of thousands, while many of those who mistakenly sought her overthrow, have lived to discover and admit their error, and have gladly and thankfully returned to her bosom.

Mr. Dixon was one of those who felt strongly upon the subject, and who did not hesitate to express what he felt. Referring to it so late even as '62, he writes: "It was like the Gunpowder Plot; the whole of the precious body of Ministers, and the whole of the connexion too, were to be consumed to ashes. That this was the real design there is no question. The matches were struck, the fire spread, the flames rose higher and hotter than was ever known, but not a hair of their head was singed. Christ was in the hottest part, very distinctly seen, and preserved both them and the Connexion. And here we are at this day, firmer fixed and grounded, better in Christian tone and spirit,

more prosperous in all our funds, and more united than ever before. The great loss in our members at the time is a matter of very deep and serious regret, and must be settled for at the great reckoning by some one or more."

The Grantham Circuit suffered much during this agitation, as will be readily understood when it is stated that in the course of a few months the number of members was reduced from a thousand to four hundred.

In company with his brother David, however, Thomas Dixon stood firm amid the storm, although the two brothers, owing to the prominent position which they held in the Society, came in for the largest share of opposition and abuse. Grossly insolent letters were written to them ; large placards were printed, in which they and the cause by which they stood, received all kinds of opprobrious epithets ; and boys with boards, bearing on either side these placards, were employed to promenade the town, with

instructions to walk by their side, or to follow them whenever they appeared in the public streets. Many who had previously welcomed them to their homes, when they went to preach in the villages now politely (?) informed them 'they were no longer wanted.' It was indeed a tempestuous and testing period in the history of Wesleyan Methodism in Grantham. Looking back upon it, we are scarcely able to account for the excited state of feeling which prevailed. Without doubt much of it arose from misunderstanding; and more, perhaps, from want of judicious management. Happily we can now refer to it as a thing of the past. So let it ever be: yet the fortitude which Mr. Dixon displayed in the midst of it and the courageous and unswerving manner in which he held to the doctrines and discipline of Methodism, cannot but be admired both by those who joined with him and those who opposed. It served in a marked manner to exhibit these excellent traits in his character, yet we could much have

wished that the exhibition had been made under less painful circumstances.

Passing over many instances, in connection with his Methodist life, illustrative of the subject of this chapter, we refer but to one other, and that of a somewhat amusing nature. Although, as we have already stated, there are about thirty villages in the Grantham Circuit, yet, more than double that number may be found, within a radius of ten miles from the town, in which Methodism has no existence. One of these, in 1862, was Ingoldsby, a somewhat large and important village. It was thought desirable that the benefit of Methodist preaching should, if possible, be extended to this place. Accordingly, several Local-preachers visited it, and after conducting services in the open-air for a few weeks, a small room was offered them for public worship. The offer was accepted. The people filled the room from Sabbath to Sabbath, almost to suffocation, and the Word preached became profitable

to those who heard. In the early part of the following year a piece of land was purchased on which to erect a chapel, and Thomas, with his brother David, went to measure and stake it out. When, with the help of a labouring man, they had nearly completed their task, the Rector of the parish,—who also held the position of a county magistrate,—and tenant of the adjoining field, came up.

“You are trespassers,” he exclaimed; “I order you off immediately, or I will serve you with a summons.” Being in a terrible rage at the very idea of Methodists coming to a place over which he had been made the spiritual overseer, he then “poured forth a flood of epithets, such as ‘scoundrels, schismatics, hypocrites, liars,’ etc., repeating them several times and as a sort of peroration to his remarkable address, added ‘I curse you all in the name of God.’”

Thomas, calm as a judge, thus made answer: “Sir, are you a Minister of the

Gospel, and dare to use such language as this ; you don't know us as a people ; we are men of peace, and shall serve your parish more than you imagine."

The infuriated Rector replied, " You serve ! You are an old man, and one of the worst of them."

" Sir," answered Thomas, " I am a man of God, and have peace with God."

" You a man of God !" exclaimed the Rector. " You are a liar." And then proceeded to pull up the stakes and threw them over the fence. In vain did Thomas seek to reason with and calm the mind of the excited and passionate clergyman, and at length withdrew, leaving him to meditate on the rashness of his acts ; and sending by the next day's post a lawyer's letter, requesting that the stakes should be placed whence they had been taken. With this request, the magistrate had either sense or fear enough to comply. But the matter did not end here. Sabbath after Sabbath in the village church, to a congregation,

which soon became larger than was ever seen there before, this strange clergyman declaimed against the Methodists, taking, to suit his purpose, such texts as the following,—“And the evil spirit answered, and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”

More efficient help in building the chapel could not have been rendered. The news spread far and wide. His own parishioners could not but see his folly. Every farmer in the village sent a team to convey stones for the new chapel from a neighbouring quarry; and when the foundation-stone was laid, as also when the chapel was opened, such crowds of people came, both churchmen and nonconformists, in all sorts of vehicles, and many of them from a great distance, that in all probability the village of Ingoldsby has seldom had so many human beings in it before, and is not likely soon to have again. Of course, no debt was left upon the premises; and, better still, the chapel has ever since been well attended,

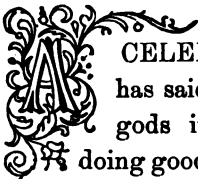
and the Society is now one of the largest in the Circuit. It is but just to observe that the clergyman referred to, is in many respects, an excellent man, and a talented preacher, as well as author; but his attack was made upon the wrong people, and especially upon the wrong representative of that people, when he sought by threats and violence to alarm and drive away Thomas Dixon and the Methodists who were endeavouring to erect a much-needed sanctuary, and thus extend the work of God.

CHAPTER IX.

BENEVOLENCE.

“ In faith and hope the world will disagree
But all mankind’s concerned in charity ;
All must be false that thwart this one great end,
And all of God that bless mankind or mend.”

POPE.

 CELEBRATED heathen writer has said, that “ Men resemble the gods in nothing so much as in doing good to their fellow creatures ;” and one writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has taught us “ to do good and to communicate forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” We hold it as a truth, that every religious man must to a greater or lesser extent be benevolent, and, that it is a spurious and unreal profession of Christianity in which

charity holds not a prominent place. The man who has little or no disposition to put forth effort and make sacrifice for the welfare of his fellows : the man who can go on from month to month and from year to year, adding field to field and vineyard to vineyard, and yet close his eyes to objects of pity and his ears to the cry of distress : —the man who can behold those who have met with misfortune and injury lying helpless and suffering in the way, and yet, like priest or Levite, pass them by on the other side, is no follower of Him, “ who though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich.” It is true that benevolence is not itself religion ; it may exist where there is no fear of God whatever ; but it is equally true that it is a certain accompaniment or fruit of religion, and that wherever the fear of God is, it will be found also.

Thomas Dixon may fairly be regarded as a benevolent man. He never had much to give away, but he did his diligence to give

of the little with which God had favoured him. He took the same view of money and worldly goods as he did of life and health, regarding them as talents with which the Disposer of all things had entrusted him, and for which he would have hereafter to give an account ; consequently, he sought to show himself faithful, employing to the best of his judgment whatever God suffered to come into his hands, and showing himself ever ready to administer to the wants of the Church or of individuals, according to his ability.

His benevolence was very easily called forth. It needed no long round of argument, it required no great power of persuasion to induce him to render help when he saw the necessity for it and had the means. Tell him a tale of suffering and distress, and almost before your story was finished, his heart would be touched and his hand opened. He was often called, and well deserved the designation, "the friend of the poor ;" and nothing seemed to afford

him so much pleasure as to evidence his friendship by visiting them in their distresses and administering to their wants. Doubtless the struggle which he himself had had with poverty in his early days, and the difficulty he had found on first leaving home in obtaining work sufficient to provide himself with food, deepened his sympathy for those whom he saw around him whose whole life was evidently one hard battle for bread. We have already seen that the visits he paid to the sick and dying were very numerous. He usually administered on these occasions to their temporal, as well as to their spiritual wants, and he neither knew nor cared to know how much went out of his pockets during these visitations, as also in answer to the daily oft-repeated ringing of his door-bell by persons anxious to solicit his aid. He was indeed a "Guardian of the Poor" long previous to his public election to that office, and it is no matter of surprise that the poor loved him and still speak of him with respect and reverence.

It may be that in some instances he did not sufficiently consider the cases of professed need which were brought before him. It may be that now and again his sympathetic nature yielded too readily as the cry of complaint was heard and the petition for assistance presented. Certain it is that he was sometimes imposed upon, and it strangely mortified him when the imposition was discovered; but since there was, on his part, perfect sincerity, his benevolence of disposition is not the less to be admired because there were those who succeeded in deceiving him.

We have heard of some who are afraid, or say they are afraid, to give, because they have so often seen their charity misapplied and thrown away on the unworthy and ungrateful; as though the cold ingratitude of other hearts were a sufficient warrant for them to suffer their own hearts to be locked up as in an impenetrable frost. Thomas Dixon felt himself answerable for duty, and not for results. He saw the sun

shining on many a fair blossom which never turned to fruit; he saw the clouds pouring out their treasures in plentiful showers on many fields which yielded no adequate return; he was, too, daily reminded of One who "is kind to the unthankful and the evil," and he proved himself a true "son of the Highest" in that, spite of the deception which was practised upon him, and of the misappropriation of his gifts by many, he ceased not "to open his hand and satisfy the desire," as far as in him lay, of those he deemed to be in trouble and distress.

When he was poor he was benevolent. He did not wait until, by diligence and perseverance, he had secured for himself a comfortable home, established a good business, opened a banking account, and made some provision for the days of darkness which might overtake him, before suffering the streams of charity to flow; he was generous when it was his lot to toil hard for but a few shillings per day, at the cabinet-maker's bench. When it cost

him no small sacrifice to do so, he showed himself ready to assist those who were in a state of helplessness and want. The true measure of a man's charity is not the amount he gives away, but the amount he has left after his gifts have been made; else what is the meaning of the words which the great Teacher spake concerning a poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury, "Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." We rejoice when men of property, wealth, and position, give liberally of their substance to the cause of Christ or humanity, and the instances of such gifts are, happily, by no means few; yet the conviction forces itself upon us that charity finds her home more commonly among the poor than among the rich. We have met with men and women in the course of our ministerial work, who not

having a sixpence in the world to call their own, have yet deserved to take rank among princes for their benevolence and charitable deeds. It is well for men to begin to give when they have but little, for charity, like every other grace, gathers strength and grows by exercise. It was so in the case of Thomas Dixon. As copper turned to silver, and silver turned to gold, as the apron of the workman was exchanged for the broad-cloth of the master, the disposition to help the needy did not decline but became more and more robust; and to the end of his life he found it a chief and increasing joy "freely to give of that which he had freely received."

His charity began at home. Regular help was sent to his poor and aged parents, accompanied with a letter expressing the pleasure he had in being able to render them any assistance, and assuring them that such assistance should be continued as long as he had the power. We insert one of these letters which with a parcel of good

things and a sum of money proportioned to his means, seems to have been dispatched monthly to Bardney until his parents were removed by death.

“ October 29, 1828.

“ MY DEAR PARENTS,

“ I trust my dear mother’s affliction will be sanctified. Cheer up ! the Lord is our God ; fear not, He will help you. Did He not so in your last illness, and will He not do so in this ? Do not be cast down ; struggle on, it will soon be over ; you will be in glory and I shall not be long after you ; God is with me. I am truly happy. After long wrestling, I have found the great salvation from all sin. Praise the Lord ! My dear father, seek earnestly for this. . . . We are sending you some clothes, a bottle of wine, and £1. If more is needed do send ; you shall not want while I have it.

“ Your affectionate Son,

“ THOMAS DIXON.”

We cannot but regard this as an admirable feature in his character. True, it was his duty to care for and administer to the wants of his parents; but that duty might have been neglected, or it might have been discharged in a very different and a much inferior manner to that which the above indicates. He honoured his father and mother, and God verified the promise which He has made to those who keep this commandment, and gave him length of days in the land.

Not only his parents, but those of his other relatives, too, who were in circumstances of want, he counted it a pleasure to relieve and support; as, also, those who served in his house, or worked in his shops. If any of these latter were overtaken by affliction or misfortune, either their wages were continued, or something was done to show his sympathy with them, and, if possible, to smooth down and make easy a path which suffering and poverty had made rough and hard.

But his liberality was chiefly directed to the cause of God. Religion was ever foremost in his estimation. To the Lord first, and to man afterwards, became his rule in giving. That section of the Christian Church to which he belonged furnishes abundant opportunity for the exercise of benevolence. In it he found, as any and every one may find, full scope for the manifestation and development of charity. To support its ministry, and to aid every fund in connection with its work, he contributed freely. Whenever any special effort was made in his Circuit to diminish the debt on any chapel, or otherwise improve any Wesleyan-Methodist property, he readily allowed his name to be put upon the subscription list. To the Foreign Missionary Society he sent a cheque on annuity for £50, as often as he could. Nor was his liberality confined to his own section of the Church. Although ever showing himself a loyal and unmistakable Methodist, he was a willing and

regular subscriber to funds in connection with other Christian denominations and institutions. The reader may judge of the pleasure which he had in being able to give to the support of God's cause from the following record in his journal.

1867. "March 10.—I found yesterday that I could spare another £50 to the Missions, so I sent it off,—may God accept it and bless its use. What am I that I should be able and willing to give so freely ! I am humbled and thankful that God has made me the steward of a few hundred pounds, given to me during the past fifty years, since I first set my foot in Grantham with scarcely sixpence of my own; and now I mean it all to go just as God would have it."

"It may be truly said that he gave away the greater portion of that with which God entrusted him, during his life, and when death came, there was but a small amount left to be distributed according to his will. Surely there is a lesson to be gathered

from this. We have no sympathy with the so-called charity, which hoards up wealth for a long life-time, and then, as if by way of atonement for the crime—for we hold that to hoard up wealth is a crime—when death is at hand, leaves it in support of some religious or philanthropic cause. The element of sacrifice, without which charity is but a name, is wanting in such a case. The giver has only given when he could not avoid it, and it can be no very pleasant thought for him to dwell upon in his last moments, that while he has been storing up his wealth and holding it as with both hands, the cause of God has been in need of help, and many around him have been suffering and in want. Mr. Dixon so distributed his money while he lived, that on the settlement of his affairs after death, but little remained, and the greater portion of this was, according to his will, devoted to the cause of God.

Did he lose anything by his gifts? It would have been a strange thing, indeed,

had he done so. As well might we ask, Does the sun lose anything by giving light to the world? or, do the clouds lose anything by giving rain to the earth? or, do the rivers lose anything by giving water to the sea? or does the heart lose anything by giving blood to the other parts of the body? God has written it in nature, as well as in His Word, that giving does not impoverish. Wherever there is a wise distribution of worldly goods, and the exercise of sincere and well-directed liberality, there is not loss, but gain. A diligent student of the Bible will not fail to perceive that some of the most striking and precious promises it contains, are those which relate to the practice of charity. "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again." "And

if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

“Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first-fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst with new wine.” It cannot therefore be any surprise to know that Mr. Dixon gained by giving. His money, his peace, his comfort, his joy, his influence, and his friends increased. Everybody who knew him, loved him all the more because he was benevolent, and who can tell what a harvest of blessing he is reaping now in the kingdom of Him who hath said, “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

CHAPTER X.

DEATH.

“Behold fond man !

See here thy pictur'd life ; pass some few years,
Thy flowering spring, thy summer's ardent strength,
Thy sober Autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding Winter comes at last,
And shuts the scene.”—THOMSON.

ND so Thomas Dixon is gone !
“When did he die ?” “About four
o'clock this morning !” “I did not
think he was so near his end.” “Ah !
well ! he was a good man, and we can
but ill afford to spare him !”—These
and many similar expressions and in-
quiries might have been heard, for they
passed many lips in Grantham on Friday,
October 11th, 1867. Friends met in each
other's houses, or gathered in little groups

about the streets, to speak of, and sigh over, what appeared to them a solemn and sad event. The dear old man, with whose pleasant face nearly every child in the town was familiar ; the simple-hearted and earnest Methodist, whose name, not only among his own people, but by every Christian society and individual who knew him, was held in such high esteem ; the visitor and friend of the poor, whose godly life even the most irreligious of his fellow-townsmen could not but admire—was dead. He had accomplished the number of his appointed days, he had finished his earthly course, he had completed the work which had been given him to do, and now—nobody thought of doubting it—he was safely gathered to his heavenly rest.

His departure was not altogether a sudden and unexpected event, though he was spared the pain and inconvenience of a long and lingering affliction. For some time, it had been evident to those who were most intimately acquainted with him,

that his strength was failing. In 1859, he was seriously ill, and many then thought he would not be able to survive. This illness was brought on by a very severe cold, which he had taken in going to, and returning from, one of his village preaching appointments, on a very stormy day. It was accompanied with much pain, which lasted many hours without any cessation. Even the medical men who were in attendance upon him held out no hope of his recovery. But in the midst of this affliction he had a strong conviction that his work in the service of the church was not finished; and on one occasion, when the efforts of the medical men seemed utterly to have failed, he turned to them with a smile lighting up his face, exclaiming "Cheer up, doctors, God will bless the medicine and I shall get better after all." So it proved; though it is more than probable that his system never recovered from the strain which it had undergone. Eight years, however, were added to his life, during which, with as

much earnestness as ever and apparently with as much vigour, he devoted himself to the work in which his soul so greatly delighted.

At length, having attained the age of seventy-three years, the decisive stroke was permitted to fall. One morning about a week previous to his death he rose early for the purpose of visiting a relative at Lichfield, but found himself unable to stand, and fell to the floor, where he was subsequently discovered in a perfectly helpless state. Medical aid was promptly secured, and it was found that he had been seized with paralysis, which had deprived him of the use of his left side. All that human skill or knowledge could suggest or do was now of little worth. It soon became apparent to all that the time of his departure was at hand. He was himself fully conscious of it, but it cast no shadow either over his face or over his spirit. Death, very near, and about to claim him as its victim, caused no alarm. He had long lived in constant

readiness for whatever might be the will of God, and the faith which had sustained him for so many years, amid struggles not a few, failed him not when he was called to engage in the last conflict. As he lay calmly and patiently waiting for the time of his departure, he spake with his accustomed cheerfulness to his friends who visited him. He had written in his journal only a few days before this paralytic stroke came, "I pant for a closer walk with God. I do not for a moment doubt the pardoning and cleansing of my soul. I have given my heart, life, and all to the Lord, and still mean Him to keep them." What was there to hinder one with such a consciousness and confidence from being calm and speaking cheerfully with his friends, even when nigh unto death? To the Rev. J. Officer who visited him, he said, "I am bound for glory." To his brother, who observed, "What a blessing it is you are ready!" he replied, "That work is all done, a long while ago, I am sure of that; I am very happy!" To his son-

in-law, Mr. Sneath, who remarked "Jesus is precious!" he said, "Yes, to them that believe;" and then repeated with much feeling those lines he had so often sung,

"Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His Name;
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
Behold, behold the Lamb!"

"I am glad you are so patient in the midst of your sufferings," said his brother. "It would be a shame if I were not, after nearly sixty years' profession of Christianity." was his answer. As he was about to depart, his sister enquired, "Is Jesus precious?" He answered, "Yes!" and in a few minutes his spirit peacefully passed away to join the spirits of the just made perfect, and to find itself in the immediate presence of its Lord.

It was a gloomy day when his remains were borne to their place of rest in the Grantham Cemetery, but old and young, rich and poor, turned out to pay respect to his memory. Most of the shops in the principal streets through which the long procession

wended its way were closed, and a solemn stillness pervaded the attentive throng as the burial service was read, and the body, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," committed to the grave.

The Rev. John Rossell preached a very impressive sermon having reference to his character, and to the loss which had been sustained by his removal, and never was the large Wesleyan chapel at Grantham more densely crowded than on that occasion. There were few eyes that remained dry that night. It was a deep sorrow which pervaded the worshipping throng; but not the sorrow of those who have no hope. A man of God was removed from their midst. He was gone to join the church triumphant and to worship in the upper temple, and they were left to lament on their own account his absence; but left also with precious memories of his life, and a bright example of Christian simplicity and zeal worthy to be copied.

Two marble tablets, neat, and unpreten-

tious in design, may be seen in the Grantham Wesleyan Chapel. They have been erected by the Trustees, and are placed one on either side of the pulpit. They are there in honour of two good and generous men who for many years were sincere and intimate friends. They are there, also, to remind those who are now accustomed to worship in that place, and, to let others know who may worship there in days to come, of the goodness, the charity, the self-denial and the zeal for God which these two men displayed. The one tablet bears the name of "Richard Hornsby, Esq.," the other we have copied,—

ERECTED BY
THE TRUSTEES OF THIS CHAPEL
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF
MR. THOMAS DIXON,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE OCT. 11TH, 1867,
AGED 73 YEARS.
A LIBERAL, ZEALOUS, AND DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD.
HE CEASED AT ONCE TO WORK AND LIVE.
"BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD!"

APPENDIX.



SPECIMEN OF THOMAS DIXON'S TRACTS.

(Written in 1843.)

“APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.”

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRIENDS A. AND B.

A.—Good morning, friend B. I am glad to see you. Have you heard what a mighty stir there is about succession in this neighbourhood?

B.—Succession! what do you mean by that?

A.—Why the Puseyites are raising a storm against the Wesleyans because they cannot prove that they have descended in a straight line from St. Peter.

B.—In a straight line from St. Peter? Why, can the Puseyites prove that they are in that line?

A.—No! but they try hard to do it, and yet the best line they can make has several broken parts in it. Still they comfort themselves with the idea that they come nearer than any other Church, and plainly state that because the hand of the Bishop is not

laid upon the head of the Wesleyan ministers they are all unauthorised, that it is a sin for them to preach, and that the people cannot be saved who hear them.

B.—Why, you quite surprise me. Is it possible that those, who profess themselves to be men of learning, have no more common sense. I should think if they cannot prove a straight and unbroken line from St. Peter they are not a whit better than the Wesleyans; and, indeed, if they could prove themselves in the line the whole thing seems to me absurd, and no advantage can be gained by it. If the Puseyites showed the same spirit of meekness, patience, love, etc.; if we found them working as hard as Peter; making as great sacrifices, and showing themselves as ready to suffer any kind of death, that the kingdom of Christ might be established; or if we saw similar success attending their labours to that which Peter had—3000 being converted under one sermon—then we might begin to think there was something in it all, and that there was not so much need for the people called Methodists. But until this is the case, I see no evil in the Wesleyans or any other body of Christians trying to do all they can. And as to the Bishop's hand—well if he is such a man as Paul or Peter, I should be glad to have his blessing; yet I do not see

that placing his hand on my head would make much difference to me. And do they really say that nobody has a right to preach without this, and that all are liable to be lost who hear them ?

A.—Yes, they fearlessly state it.

B.—Then I cannot but think they must belong to that class of persons of whom it is said, “God gave them up to strong delusions.”

A.—I quite think with you, friend B. ; and they certainly become the objects of our pity rather than of envy or fear ; and why they should find fault with other people trying to do good I cannot understand. If 50 or 500 persons are converted to God, does it matter who has been the instrument ? They are saved, and are in the fold of Christ. That is the cause of joy.

B.—Before we part, friend A., I should like to ask you if you think these Puseyites, as you call them, are in the end likely to upset Wesleyan Methodism ?

A.—You certainly do somewhat surprise me in asking such a question ; yet I cannot think you are fearful, but rather desirous of learning my opinion. You perhaps know as well as I do that there are few, if any, who have had greater persecutions than the Methodists. Thousands who once belonged to her, have left her and have desired to see

her fall. But has she fallen? No! she never stood firmer. It is true her members count between two and three thousand less this year than last, but it would not be fair to form an estimate of Methodism from the numbers of one or two years, and especially now when there has been so much national distress. If we take a census of Methodism as we do of the nation, for 10 or 70 years back you will see that her numbers are greatly increasing.

In 1772 say in round numbers she had 32,000 members				
" 1782	"	"	46,000	"
" 1792	"	"	75,000	"
" 1802	"	"	119,000	"
" 1812	"	"	155,000	"
" 1822	"	"	211,000	"
" 1832	"	"	249,000	"
" 1842	"	"	326,000	"

From the above you perceive that she has multiplied ten times in seventy years, and has added 77,000 to her members during the past ten years. As to the best proofs of apostolical succession—viz., meekness, patience, love, zeal, self-denial and success,—the Methodists are not a whit behind other churches; nay, they may truly say with Paul, "In labours more abundant." Indeed such is their willingness to work anywhere, at home or abroad, that nothing but the want of means discourages them. Already have they gone into nearly every town and

village in England, Ireland, and Scotland ; besides employing nearly four hundred Missionaries in foreign parts. More than eleven thousand preachers, Itinerant and Local are employed every week, besides thousands of other agents in schools, etc. And depend upon it, so long as there remains a bond of union between themselves and their Head, all the noise of these Puseyites will only drive them nearer each other, and promote greater activity ; so that like the Israelites in Egypt, the more they are oppressed the more they will multiply. And should the Puseyites still continue to pursue them, let them mind lest their wheels begin to drag heavily and they be drowned in the depths of trouble. If I might be allowed to give them a word of advice, I would say,—Leave the Wesleyans alone : if God be for them, it is worse than useless to fight against them. A proud man once said to the Jews, that he would destroy their city, and that he was sent by God to do it ; but the Lord put His hook into his nose and turned him back by the way that he came. Five mighty kings came against Israel with a great host, and sure of success ; but they were dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel, and what Israel could not do with the sword, God did with the thunder-bolt and hail-storm.

B.—I thank you, friend A., for the explanation you have given, and I can plainly see that the Wesleyans have nothing to fear from without, so long as they keep truly united within, or amongst themselves. This morning's conversation has been to me very interesting. I should very much like to pursue it, but time forbids it at present. When we meet again I should like the subject to be on the "Mother of Puseyism," I mean "Popery," for I find she has great expectation that our Protestant Church doors will soon be thrown open to her members, that our beautiful bells will be used to ring them to their idolatrous services, and that the nation itself will pay her homage again.

SPECIMEN OF
THOMAS DIXON'S SERMONS.

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after."—JEREMIAH xxx. 17.

God is displeased with Israel for their repeated sins, and, as a punishment, allows them to be taken captive, at which their

enemies rejoice, and call them "outcasts," forsaken of the Lord, "whom no man seeks after." For this the Lord is justly offended, as He was with Saul, when driving His people to prison, and also with Pharaoh when he held them down with hard bondage; the one was considered as done unto Himself, and of the other He said, "I have seen the affliction of My people, and am come down to deliver them." So here in the text he saith, "I will restore health unto thee, I will heal thee of thy wounds." And why doth He make this encouraging promise? Because thy enemies have called thee "outcast, whom no man seeketh after."

I shall consider the text as setting before us I. The state of a backslider; and, II. His recovery promised and made sure.

I. First. The backslider is presented to us as diseased and wounded. He was in health and soundness, free and pardoned, washed and sanctified. But strange to say, he has gone back to sickness, to broken bones, to slavery, to guilt and condemnation, to stains and pollution. Could one think it possible for a man who had once been restored to health, after enduring months and years of painful affliction and loathsome disease, to

desire and determine to go back again to sickness and wounds? That captive prisoner who has been confined to a dungeon, loaded with chains, enduring cruel oppressions is now set at liberty, his chains are knocked off, he walks out of prison, meets with the smile of friends, his darkness is turned into day, his sorrow into joy, and yet, strange to tell, in a short time the same man, of his own choice, goes back again to all his former misery. Unreasonable you say! Yes, but it is a true representation of a backslider. He has gone back from health to sickness, from ease to pain, from happiness to misery, from light to darkness, from liberty to bondage. He is again filled with a loathsome disease; the contagion of sin has taken hold of him once more; he has returned to his former master, work, and companions; and he has become in spirit and in practice "sevenfold more the child of the devil than before."

Second. He becomes the special object of reproach. He is called an "outcast," one not fit for society, turned out of doors, broken off from the stock, forsaken by God and man. Who call him an outcast? Sometimes the minister will: he will pass him by on the other side without heaving a sigh or showing any compassion. Sometimes the professor will: he will refuse to

pour one drop of sympathy into his cup of pain. And the world as it gets faster hold upon him will call him an outcast ; and the hosts of darkness as they seek to allure and draw him on to greater lengths of evil will join in the cry. This is the state of a backslider :—he feels that no man seeks after him ; he has become an object of reproach ; all are against him ; God has departed from him, and the heavens appear to him as brass. Reflection sticks to him, but it fills him with deep sorrow. A guilty conscience sticks to him, and keeps him in continual pain. Just imagine the horrors of such a mind !

Third. Go now to him, and ask how all this change has taken place. He will perhaps tell you it commenced with love of ease. He found that to keep alive his soul, labour and sacrifice were necessary ; an habitual attendance on the means of grace ; and great self-denial. This became more than flesh and blood were pleased with, and, consulting them, he yielded a little, then more, and then more still, until now he again walks after the flesh. But how miserable he is ! He is of all men to be pitied. He cannot help remembering what he has done, and yet, as all seem to be against him, he goes on drawing in sin as with a cart-rope, and making haste to hell.

II. But now, in the second place, before he be wholly lost, I have a message to deliver to him. Stop thou poor backslider and listen to what my Lord doth say, "I will restore health unto thee," and mark you he will do it for the very reason which discourages you, "because they called thee an outcast, whom no man seeketh after."

God is here presented as a Physician, restoring health and healing wounds; and, concerning this, observe,

First. Right well He understands your case. Its origin, its cause, its depth, its progress. Every secret part of your disease is known to him. Every imagination of your heart he hath searched as with a candle. He is also equally acquainted with all that is said against you, every hard speech, every cold look, etc.

Secondly. He deeply sympathises with you. There is something exceedingly sweet in sympathy, particularly when it comes from higher powers. God, the highest power, is ready to take the part of the backslider. He will not sanction nor smile upon his conduct, but He will not utterly cast him off on account of it; He will not see him in his sorrow, and "called an outcast," without pitying him, and sympathising with him, and being ready to afford him help.

Thirdly. God is willing to restore and heal

you. "I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." The very moment the poor prodigal thinks of returning, the Father is moved to meet him. As soon as Peter's eye is filled with tears of penitence, Christ's eye of mercy is turned towards him ; and the wandering disciple is not more ready to return than his forsaken Lord is ready to receive him.

Fourthly. The moving cause of God's compassion. One reason we have already stated ; but there is another, and it is the principal one. While all men seem to be against thee, Christ is for thee. His life, His death, His resurrection, His intercession are all for thee. That is the secret of God's willingness to restore and heal.

Fifthly. The necessary and fully implied submission of the backslider. He must first feel that he is from home, and remember from whence he has fallen. He must resolve to return, and bid adieu to his companions and associates. He must confess "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." The fallow ground of his heart must be broken up. The dearest and most profitable sins must be laid aside, and, most important of all, he must depend entirely, not upon his own doings, but upon the atonement of Christ. This will insure success. God can never refuse any who rest on Christ.

Sixthly. God will effect a complete cure. He will do this by removing the cause as well as the disease; by giving perfect victory over, and entirely destroying the works of the devil; by fixing in the soul dispositions of patience, humility, love, etc.; and by entirely sanctifying and cleansing with the blood of Jesus. Moreover, God will never upbraid the backslider, when restored, on account of his fall. It will not be remembered against him. Angels will attend and guard him with as much, if not more care than ever; and, if faithful unto death his entrance into heaven will be as abundant and welcome as if he had never fallen. Nay, I think I see thousands standing on the eternal shore, striving which can shout the loudest in adoring the Lamb, and which can give the strongest expression of joy at his safe arrival there.

Come, then, poor backslider, cheer up! Mercy is not clean gone for ever. Thy case is far from being hopeless. Start for God and He will start for thee. I stand between you both, and have authority to pronounce reconciliation on God's part. What shall I say for thee? I entreat thee to make up thy mind. Thy last offer will be soon. This may be it. Fly, then, in haste to thy offended, but ready to be reconciled, Father.

This subject may be useful to those who do stand. How near the pit we have sometimes strayed, and how much we are now in danger! The caution of our Lord must be remembered, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!"

But some of you have never started. You are mere lookers-on, watching the infirmities of the righteous, waiting for their halting, and ready enough to publish the sins of any who may fall, and to call them "outcasts."

Let me advise you to leave others alone and look to yourselves. Your attention is required to your own state. The question with you should not be, Are others wrong? but, Am I right? Your speaking against others who miss their way will only add to your own condemnation. Begin, ye that have not already commenced, to serve the Lord.





